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India has crazy love for Israel: Bibi amid backlash

HAMIRPUR, 29 MAY

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday described India as a "huge power" where there is "an absolutely crazy love for Israel" despite what he called efforts to delegitimise the Jewish state elsewhere. The remarks came amid a fragile geopolitical situation in West Asia. "We are expanding our alliances and what you are talking about is expanding these alliances to a large space. And the larger space is really our unique relationship with a huge power called India," Netanyahu said in a video released by the Government Press Office. "We face delegitimisation in much of the world – but not in India," he added. *—PTI*

>> PG 6: IRAN, GAZA, LEBANON

Seven killed in lightning strikes across Bihar

PATNA, 29 MAY

At least seven deaths due to lightning strikes were reported across Bihar on Friday, according to Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary. The CM instructed Disaster Management officials to give Rs 4 lakh ex gratia to families of the deceased. Heavy rains and thunderstorms caused the fatalities — three in Gaya, two in Aurangabad, and one each in Saran and Khagaria. Choudhary expressed condolences and urged caution during adverse weather. He also directed departments to assess crop damage caused by recent heavy rains and hailstorms. *—PTI*

B'luru cops issue advisory ahead of RCB's IPL final

BENGALURU, 29 MAY

Bengaluru police on Friday issued an advisory asking the public to avoid road celebrations, bursting crackers, bike rallies and disorderly behaviour after the IPL 2026 final on May 31, in which Royal Challengers Bengaluru will play. Police said maintaining law and order and public safety was the responsibility of every citizen. The advisory prohibited speeding, stunts, misuse of horns, public drinking, fights and provocative social media posts. LED screens facing roads and public telecasts outside malls, pubs and other establishments were also barred without permission. The advisory comes after the June 2025 stampede near M Chinnaswamy Stadium during RCB victory celebrations that killed 11 people and injured 33 others. *—PTI*

Siddaramaiah, DKS see RaGa; CLP meet on 30 May

Guv accepts resignation; Swearing in likely on Monday

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

A day after resigning as the chief minister of Karnataka, Congress leader Siddaramaiah on Friday met party leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge in the national capital. Siddaramaiah was accompanied by his son MLC Yathindra.

Siddaramaiah handed his resignation to the Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's Lok Bhavan on Thursday in the latter's absence. The Governor accepted the resignation on Friday.

Siddaramaiah is believed to have discussed his future plans and the new government formation with the High Command leaders. He thanked Rahul Gandhi for giving him an opportunity to serve the State, sources said.

Siddaramaiah later had lunch with his Deputy and likely successor DK Shivakumar, along with Yathindra and Minister KJ George. Siddaramaiah is reportedly looking to secure a Cabinet berth for his son.

Shivakumar also held separate meetings with Kharge and AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal during the day. He told media that a meeting of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) in Karnataka will be held on Saturday. Major issues on the agenda include a Cabinet reshuffle, electing a CLP leader, the possibility of changing the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) President, and officially announcing the next Chief Minister.

Sources have said that Shivakumar will become the CM, honouring a power-sharing pact. PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi said that the swearing in ceremony was likely on Monday or Tuesday, but there was no official confirmation.

Another key issue expected to be discussed is the Deputy Chief Minister post. Reports suggest that there may be three-four DyCMs, with different groups vying for the post. Front runners include Jarkiholi and Home Minister G Parameshwara.

However, Congress General Secretary and Karnataka in-charge Randeep Surjewala, who was present during Siddaramaiah's hour-long meeting with Gandhi said: "There is no hurdle in the smooth tradition of power."

Tributes poured in for Siddaramaiah, the State's longest serving CM. Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil said that a "new position" will be carved out for Siddaramaiah in the State, after he rejected the Congress' offer for a Rajya Sabha berth. *—PTI*

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Former chief minister Siddaramaiah embraces Congress leader Rahul Gandhi at 10, Janpath, in New Delhi; Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar takes AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge's blessings, on Friday *—SALAR*

'LEARN FROM UPSC'

Need accountability: SC on NEET leak

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

We should not disappoint our youngsters, the Supreme Court on Friday said while stressing that the real problem relating to medical entrance examination NEET-UG would not stop till "actual accountability arises".

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the apex court that the government is seriously concerned about the concerns of the youths and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is personally supervising the situation so that "there is no lacunae".

Mehta told a bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe that some new mechanisms have been put in place for the NEET-UG retest scheduled for 21 June.

"The real problem won't stop till actual accountability arises," the bench observed.

The top court was hearing pleas, including the one seeking a direction to replace or restructure the National Testing Agency (NTA), which is responsible for conducting the NEET-UG, with a robust and autonomous body to conduct the medical entrance examination.

The bench cited the example of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and said there was never a situation like paper leak in the examinations conducted by the commission and the NTA needs to learn from other institutions

The bench said it is "actually very traumatic" if something like this happens, not just for the students, but also for their families.

"Accountability will be effective only when you know on whose shoulders, which individual shoulders, the responsibility lies," it said. The top law officer said, "The buck must stop somewhere". *– PTI*

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- Noting that leaks were 'very traumatic' for students and their families, the Supreme Court said that the NTA should learn from the UPSC, which has not had such paper leaks

SPURIOUS LIQUOR KILLS 14 IN PUNE, 8 ARRESTED

PUNE, 29 MAY

At least 14 people died in the Pimpri Chinchwad area and Pune city after consuming suspected spurious liquor. The police arrested eight individuals, including a bootlegger, in this connection, officials said on Friday.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis termed the incident as "very serious," and said more people are likely to be arrested as the spurious liquor "entire ecosystem" has been identified.

Seven people died in the Phugewadi area of Pimpri Chinchwad, while five others died in the Pandhare Mala area of Pune's Hadapsar after consuming suspected spurious liquor. Three men suspected of consuming the toxic liquor are undergoing treatment at a hospital in Pimpri Chinchwad, the police said.

Police have arrested eight people, including a key bootlegger, in connection with the alleged supply of methanol-laced liquor to the Phugewadi area in Pimpri Chinchwad, they said.

Sandip Atole, the DCP (Zone 1) of Pimpri Chinchwad, said, "We found that seven people have died so far due to suspected consumption of toxic liquor, and three others are undergoing treatment."

The probe has been handed over to the CBI. *— PTI*

SC lets Vinesh Phogat play Asian Games trials

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

The Supreme Court on Friday permitted wrestler Vinesh Phogat to participate in the selection trials to be held on 30 May and 31 May for the Asian Games 2026, while hearing a plea filed by the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) challenging the Delhi High Court order that permitted Phogat to participate.

"I (Phogat) just want to participate," her advocate Madhavi Divan said on her behalf, adding that the wrestler may or may not succeed.

Earlier this month, the WFI had declared Phogat ineligible to participate in domestic events till 26 June, citing the mandatory six-month notice period linked to athletes returning from retirement under anti-doping rules. The Delhi High Court, however, had taken exception to this, citing that Phogat was returning from maternity break, and saying that motherhood should not be a basis for exclusion of female athletes.

The WFI meanwhile has decided to allow Phogat to compete only in the women's 50kg category – her preferred category in her last few international events – in the Asian Games selection trials.

At least 16 women wrestlers have approached the court asking that Phogat not be granted direct entry into the trials rather than through the regular domestic pathway.

Phogat had reportedly been training for the 53kg category, but a WFI source said that as there had been no correspondence from the wrestler, they will allow her in the 50kg bracket, where she previously competed, including the 2024 Paris Olympics. *—PTI*

Kerala plans 3-day menstrual leave for schoolgirls

T'PURAM, 29 MAY

Three days of monthly menstrual leave for schoolgirls is among the child-friendly initiatives planned by the UDF government in Kerala, along with ensuring that all workplaces with more than 50 employees provide safe daycare centres and creches.

The women and child-friendly initiatives were part of the policy address of the VD Satheesan-led government, read out by Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar in the Assembly on Friday.

"My government also plans to announce... weekend catch-up classes, so that these girls do not fall behind," said the Governor in the address.

He said the government proposes to put in place Child Care Rules, ensuring that all public offices and industrial establishments with more than 50 employees have safe daycare centres and creches.

The government also plans to adoption campaigns to make Kerala India's first "orphan-free" state. *— PTI*

RBI mulls digital rupee for govt schemes, payments abroad

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

The Reserve Bank will explore the use of Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) in cross-border transactions besides expanding the digital rupee to more direct benefit transfer (DBT) schemes and domestic retail space during the current fiscal year.

Bilateral discussions with MAS and the Central Bank of the UAE (CBUAE) were held on this.

The RBI further signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on digital asset collaboration with the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) in 2025-26. It also joined multilateral Bank for International Settlements (BIS)-Innovation Hub-led initiatives.

Providing a framework for testing of innovative products/services leveraging CBDC under the CBDC and Asset Tokenisation (CAT) sandbox is another RBI agenda during FY27. *—PTI*

HAPPY BELATED BAKRID

The Muslim community attended special prayers to mark the Eid-ul-Adha (Bakrid) festival, at Idgah Maidan on Mysuru Road in Bengaluru, on Thursday *MOHAMMED ASAD*

AS INDIA BAKES

1 day of extreme heat causes 3,400 deaths

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

A single day of extreme heat causes about 3,400 excess deaths across India, while a five-day heatwave causes nearly 30,000, a study by researchers Piyush Narang and Ashok Gadgil from the India Energy and Climate Center at the University of California Berkeley, United States, has estimated.

The team adapted findings from a multi-city analysis of heat-related mortality across 10 cities in India to estimate excess deaths across all districts in the country.

'Excess deaths' is a public health metric that refers to the difference between total deaths over a specific period and deaths that could be expected to occur based on historical data.

A 2.3-fold disproportion between mortality burden and economic capacity was found in the five highest death-burden states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat, which together accounted for 66 per cent of the country's excess deaths while contributing only 29 per cent of India's GDP.

The result has direct and urgent implications for how India designs and funds its heat resilience architecture, the researchers said.

They added that the district-level estimates presented in the study align with findings from an increasing body of epidemiological and modelling evidence that suggest South Asia, especially India, is particularly vulnerable to heat-related mortality.

Heatwave to severe heatwave conditions were prevailing in north, central and east India, with temperatures consistently exceeding 45 degrees Celsius in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, parts of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana over the past few days. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 4, 5

People cover themselves in the scorching heat at the Taj Mahal, Agara, on Friday *—PTI*

— PTI

264km stormwater drains in City to be built

BENGALURU, 29 MAY

To mitigate flooding, the State government plans to construct 264 kilometres of primary and secondary reinforced concrete cement (RCC) stormwater drainage (SWD) in Bengaluru at a cost of Rs 2,000 crore. According to Byatarayanapura MLA and Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, the capacity of SWDs to carry rainwater will be increased by remodelling earthen and inefficient masonry drains into RCC drains to prevent recurring floods. Gowda claims this project will be funded by the Revenue Department through a World Bank loan. He called it the single largest investment in Bengaluru's stormwater drainage network. With this project, Bengaluru will have 860 kilometres of primary and secondary drains and part of the work will be within the Byatarayanapura constituency. —*AGENCIES*

50% Cabinet reshuffle sparks lobbying

Congress may follow 'Kamaraj model' and do away with old blood to make way for youth

BENGALURU, 29 MAY

Congress' Chief Whip in the State Legislative Council Saleem Ahmed said that 50 per cent of the Cabinet positions may be allocated to new faces, as party leaders began pressing upon the High Command to allocate portfolios to members of their community or region.

Speaking to reports on Friday, Ahmed indicated a massive reshuffle on the cards, but said the final decision rests with the High Command.

"We believe that 50 per cent of the Cabinet positions should be allocated to new faces," he said. "Regarding the Ministers who are to be replaced, those who are experienced and have served as ministers for three years, they should be assigned to party organisational work."

He said that the party intends to implement a "Kamaraj plan model". This refers to a decision made by former Madras (now Tamil Nadu) chief minister K Kamaraj, where ministers voluntarily resigned to rebuild the Congress at a grassroots level in the 1960s.

Ahmed said that was important as the party begins preparation for the 2028 Assembly election.

Cong leader Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar have lunch with Minister KH Muniyappa and MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah in New Delhi on Friday after the former stepped down as Chief Minister —*PTI*

The developments come head of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meeting on Saturday, where such matters are expected to be discussed.

It is unclear what portfolios will be changed. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, the likely successor to resigning Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, is likely to continue holding the Irrigation portfolio. It remains to be seen what happens to the Bengaluru Development Portfolio, which Shivakumar currently holds, and the Finance portfolio, which Siddaramaiah currently holds.

However, party leaders have already begun placing demands before the High Command.

Seven Congress leaders from Kolar district, including three MLAs and two MLCs, submitted a letter to AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge, stating that three ministerial posts should be allocated to leaders from the district.

They demanded ministerial berths for Bangarpet MLA SN Narayanaswamy under the SC (Right) category, and Malur MLA Nanjegowda and Kolar MLA Manjunath under the General quota.

Similarly, Narasimharaja MLA Tanveer Sait, a senior Congress leader, said he is also in the race for a Cabinet berth.

He said he missed the opportunity in Siddaramaiah's tenure, as they both hail from the same district.

"As the next CM will be from another district, I hope that my party High Command will consider my seniority, experience, and maturity, and accommodate during the Cabinet formation", he said

CASTE QUOTA IS KEY

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre noted that the caste and religious makeup of the next Cabinet could have an impact on the Congress, as he sought "adequate" representation for the Lingayat community, which he is part of.

"Lingayats are a major community in Karnataka. Lingayats are basically a secular community. Thirty-six legislators of the Lingayat community have been elected from the Congress party," he said. "As the President of the All India Veerashaiva Lingayat Mahasabha and also as a Congressman, my representation to the High Command is that Lingayat community leaders should be properly represented in the Cabinet."

Supporters and party workers from Khandre's constituency and Bidar district have demanded that he be given the post of Deputy Chief Minister as well as the KPCC President's post.

—*Salar News with Agencies*

DKS could become India's richest CM

If current Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar is chosen to become the next Chief Minister, he would become the country's richest CM, overtaking Andhra Pradesh's N Chandrababu Naidu. According to assets disclosed in his 2023 Karnataka Assembly election affidavit, Shivakumar and his dependents declared combined assets worth more than Rs 1,400 crore. Naidu, by contrast, has declared assets of a Rs 931 crore, while Tamil Nadu's C Joseph Vijay is the third richest CM with assets exceeding Rs 600 crore, according to his affidavit. Notably, ADR also ranks Shivakumar as the second richest MLA in the country, behind Maharashtra's Parag Shah, who has declared assets of Rs 3,383 core.

Metro Purple Line will be partially closed on Sunday

BENGALURU,29 MAY

Metro services on the Purple Line between Deepanjalinagar and Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna Stations will be suspended on Sunday for essential maintenance, the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) said. Metro services on the Purple Line will be curtailed for two hours, from 7 am to 9am. Normal metro services across the entire Purple Line, including the affected stretch between Deepanjalinagara and Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna Metro Stations, will resume from 9am. During the two hour suspension period, metro services will start as per schedule at 7 am and will operate as per the regular timetable on the following sections along the Purple Line: Challaghatta to Mysuru Road, Kempegowda (Majestic) to Whitefield (Kadugodi), Madavara to Silk Institute, RV Road to Bommasandra. —*PTI*

JARKIHOLI LIKELY TO BECOME NEXT KPCC PRESIDENT

BELAGAVI, 29 MAY

Senior Congress leader and Minister **Satish Jarkiholi** is likely to become the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) President, highly placed party sources told Salar News.

AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal personally spoke to Jarkiholi over the phone on Thursday and proposed that he assume charge of the State party organisation, sources said.

Jarkiholi himself has sought to play down the reports.

"Yes, discussions have taken place," he confirmed. "We informed the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister about it. They said they would hold final discussions today (in New Delhi) and come back. Let us ask them."

However, Jarkiholi, who represents the Yamakanamaradi Assembly constituency in Belagavi district and is serving his third consecutive term as MLA, is said to have also sought to continue as the Public Works Department (PWD) Minister, or another key portfolio in the new government set up in addition to the KPCC President post.

- AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal spoke to Jarkiholi on Thursday to propose he assume charge of the State party organisation

Jarkiholi reportedly told the High Command that "Merely holding the party president's post without administrative responsibility may not be politically effective," when arguing for key government positions.

Party leaders believe that Jarkiholi has mass appeal and have confidence in his organisational abilities. The Congress High Command reportedly believes that he can strengthen the party ahead of the 2028 Assembly elections, especially in in the Kittur Karnataka and Kalyana Karnataka regions where both Siddaramaiah and Jarkiholi enjoy considerable support.

Notably, Jarkiholi has said that DK Shivakumar will become the next Chief Minister, telling reporters that "as per the High Command's decision, things have already been finalised according to the agreement reached earlier." He said that this development was imminent. —*Salar News*

SIDDARAMAIAH STOOD FIRMLY BESIDE ME, SAYS DKS

BENGALURU, 29 MAY

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar expressed "gratitude and respect" for Siddaramaiah, saying they "worked shoulder to shoulder in strengthening the party". Shivakumar hoped Karnataka's longest-serving Chief Minister "people-centric governance" would continue for "years ahead".

"Ever since I was entrusted with the responsibility of serving as KPCC President in 2020, Siddaramaiah has stood firmly beside me," Shivakumar said on X. "If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together, look forward to carrying this journey forward for Karnataka."

"God does not give boons or curses. He only gives opportunities. What truly matters is what we make of those... Siddaramaiah's life is one of the finest reflections of this," he said.

From a humble village in Mysuru to leading Karnataka as Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah's five-decade journey stands as a testament to resilience, perseverance, and an unwavering commitment to social justice, he noted.

Dy CM DK Shivakumar with outgoing CM Siddaramaiah —*SALAR*

"The impact of several public welfare schemes and the many developmental initiatives undertaken during his tenure will remain significant chapters in Karnataka's growth story. He has shaped the political and social fabric of our State through people-centric governance and inclusive leadership," Shivakumar stated.

"As he steps down from the office of the CM, I express my heartfelt gratitude and deep respect for his years of service and leadership to the people of Karnataka," Shivakumar, added.

It has been a privilege to serve alongside Siddaramaiah as Deputy Chief Minister and to continuously learn from his experience, wisdom, and political foresight, Shivakumar added. —*PTI*

Siddaramaiah's public life has consistently reflected dignity, compassion, and a deep commitment to social justice. From humble beginnings to serving Karnataka twice as Chief Minister, he remained steadfast in his commitment to equality, harmony, and the welfare of the marginalised

-Mallikarjun Kharge, AICC Prez

He has presented 17 Budgets in the state, just one less than the record set by Vajubhai Vala in Gujarat... Each of his 17 Budgets was noteworthy and impactful. He has been a true mass leader in the full and best sense of the term. Eloquent in speech, his stinging wit directed at his political opponents was always effective.... Siddaramaiah has been... an uncompromising upholder of secular values and traditions, and a forceful voice for rationality and scientific temper

-Jairam Ramesh, Congress Leader

He is a leader who understood the language of tears from the poor, the backward, farmers, workers, and ordinary people... The list of his contributions include implementation of farmer loan waivers, Anna Bhagya, Ksheera Bhagya, and the five guarantees... By declaring Basavanna as the State's cultural leader, he has etched a permanent place in the hearts of all Basava devotees. (With) Vachana University, he laid foundation for passing down the principles of the Sharanas, Vachana literature... The leader who walked the talk

-MB Patil, Minister

FLOOD TRANSIT

A private bus is stranded on a flooded Mysuru Road after heavy rains lashed Bengaluru on Friday —*SALAR*

Six killed as property dispute turns deadly

VIJAYAPURA, 29 MAY

An alleged property dispute took a fatal turn when six people, among them five members of a family, were killed in this district on Friday, police said.

The incident occurred in Govindapura village in Chadachana taluk of the district, they said.

Preliminary investigation suggests that the clash erupted during a mediation meeting convened to resolve a long-standing dispute over around 10 acres of land between the victims' family and another family from a nearby village, police said.

A senior police officer said a verbal altercation broke out between the two families during another mediation meeting held on Friday over the same issue.

"Following this, deadly weapons were used, and firing took place, leading to the deaths of six people," he said.

Locals said village elders had earlier attempted to mediate the dispute, but the matter remained unresolved.

Senior police officials rushed to the spot after the incident, and additional police personnel were deployed in the area to maintain law and order. Police said the exact sequence of events and the circumstances that led to the firing are yet to be ascertained. —*Salar News*

The accident took place on Thursday night on the National Highway 158 near Tumakuruhalli Gate in Molakalmuru taluk —*SALAR*

5 dead as punctured car runs into parked lorry

CHITRADURGA, 29 MAY

All five passengers in a moving car were killed in Chitradurga when the vehicle's tyre suddenly burst, causing the vehicle to crash violently into a lorry parked by the roadside.

The accident took place on Thursday night on the National Highway 158 near Tumakuruhalli Gate in Molakalmuru taluk.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) Satyanarayana Rao told Salar News that the car was traveling from Ballari to Challakere when the incident occurred at around 9.45pm. He said the driver lost control after the tyre burst.

"The impact completely mangled the car, and all five passengers inside succumbed to severe injuries and heavy blood loss at the scene itself," Rao said.

The deceased were Raghavendra, 40; Pramod, 36; Rudresh, 30; Somashekhar, 35; and Mallikarjuna, 35; all residents of Challakere. Raghavendra is a well-known photographer.

Molakalmuru Police Station officers and nearby residents pulled the body out of the completely crushed car and shifted them to mortuary of a nearby government hospital for post-mortem examination.

A case has been registered and investigation is underway. —*Salar News*

Spiritual heritage inspires more conscious world: VP

BENGALURU/ DAVANAGERE, 29 MAY

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan on Friday said India's spiritual heritage and civilisational wisdom were inspiring a more compassionate and conscious world.

His remarks came lauding spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's efforts to spread the message of peace, harmony and human values across the globe. He launched five initiatives on youth development, entrepreneurship, sustainability and education at The Art of Living International Center as the organisation marked 45 years of service.

Addressing the event, he said the Art of Living movement had emerged as a global humanitarian and spiritual force promoting compassion, resilience, clarity and joy.

He also unveiled a commemorative postal stamp marking 45 years of The Art of Living's contribution to individual well-being, social transformation, and global peace.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the 75th platinum jubilee celebrations of University BDT College of Engineering in Davanagere, the Vice President said engineers, scientists, researchers, and entrepreneurs would play a crucial role in India's aspiration to become a developed nation by 2047. India is witnessing a new era of transformation driven by technology, innovation, and the strength of its talented youth. —*PTI*

CONGMAN VENKATARAMANAPPA

Former minister dies at 80

BENGALURU, 29 MAY

Former Karnataka minister Venkataramanappa died following a heart attack at a private hospital in Bengaluru early on Friday. He was 80.

Family sources said, Venkataramanappa, had been undergoing treatment for age-related ailments in a private hospital. He breathed his last at around 6 am, sources added. A prominent Congress leader from Tumakuru, Venkataramanappa served as MLA four times and held ministerial positions twice during his political career.

He was widely regarded as a leader of the oppressed sections and had earned popularity in the Pavagada region

through his grassroots political work.

He is survived by son H V Venkatesh, the sitting MLA from Pavagada, and other family members.

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara visited the hospital and paid his last respects to the departed leader. He also consoled the bereaved family members.

Speaking to reporters later, Parameshwara described Venkataramanappa's death as a "deeply painful loss" and described him as a simple and people-oriented leader.

"He earned a name for himself through public service and simplicity," he said.

Venkataramanappa's was a popular leader of the oppressed classes in Tumakuru through sustained public engagement, he said.

"Even after his son Venkatesh became MLA from Pavagada, people continued to affectionately refer to Venkataramanappa as MLA," he added. —*PTI*

Sena's netas can't talk or walk, need youth: Party MLA

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 29 MAY

The current crop of Shiv Sena ministers in Maharashtra has grown old, and the party should give younger leaders a chance, which would ensure that Eknath Shinde becomes the chief minister in 2029, MLA Santosh Bangar has said. Addressing Sena workers during 'Shivsamvaad' tour led by party MP Shrikant Shinde on Thursday, Bangar urged the party leadership to promote younger leaders and also claimed that current ministers do not answer phone calls. Without naming anyone, he said, "These people have grown old and cannot talk, walk or listen properly. I am not saying they should be removed, but they should be given other responsibilities. There are tigers standing behind the goats. If the tigers are brought forward, Shiv Sena's Eknath Shinde will become chief minister again in 2029." *—PTI*

—X/ KUMAR DAK

R'than minister booked for abusing cops

JAIPUR, 29 MAY

Rajasthan Minister of State for Cooperation, Gautam Kumar Dak, has been booked for allegedly verbally abusing police officers and threatening them publicly. The FIR was lodged at Dungla police station after an audio clip circulating online appeared to show him insulting policemen. However, Dak issued a video statement denying any connection to the audio. The FIR, under sections 132, 351(2), and 352 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, accuses him of obstructing government work, criminal intimidation, and using criminal force. Dungla SHO Shaitan Singh stated that the incident happened Monday when he received a call from Dak, asking him to step outside and demanding to see two constables, Vishnu Kumar and Laxminarayan. The minister allegedly began abusing them publicly, attempted to assault them, and threatened them. *—PTI*

—ANI

TN farmers protest, accuse govt of betrayal

PERAMBALUR, 29 MAY

Tamil Nadu farmers staged a protest outside the Perambalur district Collector's office, alleging the government failed to implement promises made during the election campaign regarding the crop loan waiver scheme. Dressed in black and carrying black flags, the protesters demanded a review and realisation of the assurances given to farmers before the Assembly elections.

The demonstration was prompted by dissatisfaction with the cooperative crop loan waiver scheme announced by the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) government led by Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay. Farmers claimed the scheme differed from the election manifesto, which promised complete waiver for small and marginal farmers owning less than five acres and a 50 per cent waiver for larger farmers.

Instead, the new scheme imposed limits and a graded waiver, offering only Rs 5,000 for loans exceeding certain amounts, a move farmers described as inadequate. Protesters argued the reliance on Central guidelines was inconsistent with state laws and SC judgments. *—ANI*

Kerala Guv fumes over partial Vande Mataram

CM says complete recital of national song not mandatory

THIRU'PURAM, 29 MAY

Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar on Friday expressed displeasure over Vande Mataram not being sung in full in the State Assembly before his policy address, while Chief Minister VD Satheesan said that a complete recital of the national song was not mandatory.

Arlekar claimed that proper protocol should be followed when the Governor is attending functions.

Before and after the Governor read out the UDF government's policy address in the Kerala Assembly, a band team performed the opening stanzas of Vande Mataram.

Speaking to reporters at Lok Bhavan, Arlekar said that in the Assembly, the song was only played and not sung. Arlekar added that he has already spoken to the Assembly Speaker, Thiruvanchoor Radha krishnan, on the matter.

Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar —PTI

Chief Minister VD Satheesan

Later, Satheesan told reporters that rendering the Vande Mataram in full was not mandatory as there was no law enacted by the Parliament.

VIJAYAN BACKS SATHEESAN

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Pinarayi Vijayan also backed the state government's decision not to play or sing the national song in full. "To sing it in full is part of the RSS agenda. We are not obligated to implement it," he said.

The BJP called it an "insult" to Lok Bhavan and alleged that the UDF government "yielded to Jamaat-e-Islami and the CPI(M)".

ATTACK ON ED SERIOUS OFFENCE: CM

Satheesan said the attack on ED officials after a search at Vijayan's rented residence here was a serious offence. He told reporters that those involved could be classified as criminals.

Justifying the search, Satheesan said it was done as part of an ongoing investigation and added that the Congress-led UDF too had raised allegations against Vijayan's daughter of having financial deals with a mining firm, CMRL.

Pinarayi Vijayan accused the Congress of taking a "narrow-minded" stand on the Enforcement Directorate's actions against the leaders of parties opposed to the BJP, claiming that the Congress objects only when its own leaders are targeted by the ED. *—PTI*

TAMIL NADU ASSEMBLY POLLS

Cong MP flags irregularities in candidate selection

CHENNAI, 29 MAY

Congress MP S Jothimani on Friday alleged "massive irregularities" in allocating constituencies and selecting party candidates as well for the 23 April Tamil Nadu Assembly polls.

Massive irregularities took place within the Congress party and constituencies were sought and allocated to suit candidates who had already been selected, she claimed.

"Under the guise of 'surveys', largescale corruption has reportedly occurred. Senior party workers who have served the party for decades and individuals with genuine winning prospects were completely sidelined, while many newcomers and candidates with little or no electoral prospects were given opportunities after constituencies were specifically negotiated for them," the Karur MP said.

Some of those who were given the opportunity to contest elections either left the party or became inactive within days after the election. "Who gave these individuals opportunities? On what basis were they selected? What action has been taken against those responsible for these mistakes?" she asked on 'X'.

Without conducting an inquiry into constituency allocation and candidate selection, forming a committee only to investigate alleged anti-party activities during the election was merely an arrangement to protect those who are actually responsible for the wrongdoing. *—PTI*

Census work to start in Bengal from 1 Aug, says Suvendu

KOLKATA, 29 MAY

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Friday alleged the Trinamool Congress (TMC) government failed to act on a communication from the Centre in February 2025 about the Census exercise, causing the state to lag behind others in preparations for the nationwide enumeration process.

He announced that census operations in West Bengal would commence on 1 August and continue till the end of February 2027, being conducted digitally. Government employees will collect and upload data to a central server using a mobile app.

Adhikari said Census Director Rashmi Komal would oversee the exercise in the state and that initial data collection will be carried out between 1 August and 15 August. He also unveiled two toll-free helpline numbers for complaints and assistance.

"The census has no connection with politics. It is a Constitutional obligation," he added, appealing to people to cooperate with officials.

He further claimed that the enumeration is important for the state to curb border infiltration and alleged attempts to change the demography of the state, adding that the previous government had not prioritised this issue. *—PTI*

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari during a visit to the ISKCON Mayapur temple in Nadia district—PTI

Kolkata Police to upgrade riot gear, forms quality check panel

KOLKATA, 29 MAY

The West Bengal government has initiated an overhaul of Kolkata Police's riot-control and law-and-order equipment to match the standards of the Delhi Police and other Central armed police forces, a senior official said on Friday.

The move comes after eight police personnel were injured in stone-pelting on 18 May. Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari raised the issue as well during his first visit to the Kolkata Police headquarters on 26 May. A five-member committee was constituted by order of the Kolkata Police Commissioner on 27 May to review and upgrade existing equipment.

"There is a need for better helmets, shields, body protectors and tear-gas systems," said a police officer *—PTI*

New Mamata poem targets political turncoats after dissent

KOLKATA, 29 MAY

Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo Mamata Banerjee has penned a new poem titled 'Girgiti' (Chameleon), which political observers believe is aimed at politicians who have turned critical of the organisation after its poll loss.

Sharing the poem on social media on Thursday, Banerjee, the former chief minister of West Bengal, wrote that some people alter their character and allegiances within hours to serve their financial interests and personal ambitions, as a chameleon changes colours.

This comes after several party leaders have publicly expressed dissatisfaction with the organisation, raising corruption allegations and questioning internal functioning. There has also been a series of resignations from party posts recently. *—PTI*

MVA seat-sharing for M'rashtra council polls over, 8 for Cong

MUMBAI, 29 MAY

The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) announced on Friday that it has finalised the seat-sharing agreement for the 18 June Maharashtra Legislative Council elections. The Congress will contest eight of the 17 seats, the highest among the alliance partners. State Congress chief Harshwardhan Sapkal stated that the MVA, which includes Shiv Sena (UBT) and the NCP, reached consensus on all 17 seats.

The Congress will contest Chandrapur, Yavatmal, Bhandara, Amravati, Ahilyanagar, Solapur, Dharashiv, and the Nagpur byelection. Shiv Sena (UBT) will contest six seats: Raigad, Jalgaon, Parbhani-Hingoli, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Nanded, and Nashik.

The NCP will contest Pune, Thane, and Sangli-Satara. The BJP-NCP-Sena alliance has not announced its seat-sharing plan. *—PTI*

WILL SEEK CBI PROBE IF TVK CONTINUES HORSE TRADING: AIADMK

TIRUVANNAMALAI, 29 MAY

- Targeting TVK's Arjuna, he said Arjuna was poaching AIADMK MLAs instead of serving the public

AIADMK whip Agri SS Krishnamurthy on Friday said that the party will demand a CBI investigation if the alleged poaching of lawmakers via "multi-crore cash" transfers by the ruling TVK continues.

Four AIADMK legislators, K Maragatham Kumaravel (Maduranthakam Assembly constituency), S Jayakumar (Perundurai), P Sathyabama (Dharapuram) and Esakki Subaya (Ambasamudram) resigned as MLAs and joined the TVK, triggering an intense debate among political parties in the state. They were among the rebel AIADMK MLAs who voted in favour of the TVK government in the Assembly during the floor test on 13 May.

Accusing that TVK had forced four AIADMK MLAs to resign through horse-trading involving "crores of rupees", Krishnamurthy said, "If they continue this, I am duty-bound to firmly state at this moment that we will not hesitate to place a demand for a CBI enquiry into this, with the approval of party's general secretary Edapaddi K Palaniswami."

Targeting TVK Minister Arjuna, Krishnamurthy claimed that he was focusing on poaching AIADMK functionaries rather than serving the public. *—PTI*

Panel to examine unblocking of Cockroach Party's X handle

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

The Delhi High Court on Friday refused to order unblocking of satirical digital outfit Cockroach Janta Party's X account, but asked a review committee to examine the issue and take a decision before 7 July.

Justice Purushaindra Kumar Kaurav permitted the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke to appear virtually before the committee, and observed that if the panel is satisfied that the blocking must be set aside, it is legally empowered to order unblocking of the CJP's X account. Issuing notices to the Centre and X on Dipke's petition against the blocking of the CJP's handle by the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the judge listed the matter for hearing on 7 July.

Senior advocate Akhil Sibal, appearing for Dipke, submitted that the CJP account was "pure satire" and if there were some objectionable tweets, only those could be blocked.

Justice Kaurav, however, observed that the blocking order was not on record and it would consider the petitioner's request after the Centre files a reply to the plea as the case has issues carrying "wider ramifications".

Dipke, who was earlier associated with the AAP, launched the CJP amid a controversy over remarks attributed to CJI Surya Kant on "cockroaches" and "parasites" during a hearing on 15 May . Launched on 16 May, the CJP claims that it wants to build an independent youth-driven movement to amplify the concerns of the youth and hold the government accountable.

The original X handle of the CJP was withheld in India on 21 May, following which the group resurfaced with a new handle, 'Cockroach is Back', which has over 2,27,000 followers. *—PTI*

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Anti-infiltration panel mulls strict laws

INDORE, 29 MAY

Former Supreme Court judge Justice Prakash Prabhakar Naolekar, who heads the high-level committee for assessing demographic changes, has described the demographic change caused by infiltration as a "huge challenge," and said the panel may recommend "more stringent laws" to the Centre if necessary.

The problem of infiltration can also cause "disturbance" in the country, he said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced the formation of the high-level committee on Tuesday to assess the demographic changes across India due to "illegal immigration and other unnatural causes" and suggest measures to address them.

In an interview to PTI in Indore, Justice Naolekar, the chairman of the committee, said, "Demographic change is a huge challenge. When people enter the country illegally through infiltration, it affects the entire nation."

The government provides assistance to the poor under various schemes, but this assistance gets divided due to infiltration, he said.

Asked whether there is an adequate legal framework to deal with the problem of infiltration, Justice Naolekar replied that if the committee headed by him felt that "more stringent laws" were needed, it could recommend this to the government.

He stressed the need for stringent laws and strict enforcement by the government machinery to prevent crimes.

Justice Naolekar said that Indian laws clearly distinguish between refugees and infiltrators.

He also said that demographic change caused by illegal migration appears to be a global phenomenon.

"Countries like France, Britain, Germany, and the US are also facing this problem," he said.

The committee's members are the Census Commissioner, former IAS officer Durga Shankar Mishra, former IPS officer Balaji Srivastava and Dr Shamika Ravi.

The panel will submit its report to the government within a year. *— PTI*

11 WB holding centres house 335 suspected infiltrators

As part of its "detect, delete and deport" policy, the West Bengal government has so far set up 11 holding centres for suspected illegal immigrants, and 335 detainees are housed in such facilities, officials said on Friday.

Basirhat in North 24 Parganas district, bordering Bangladesh, accounts for the largest number of detainees suspected to be either Bangladeshis or Rohingyas.

"Some of these are functioning under police districts, while others are operating at the district level," an official said. *—PTI*

AAP leaders including Manish Sisodia (2nd right) and party supporters celebrate in Chandigarh after wins in Punjab civic body elections —X/AAP

AAP wins 45 pc of wards, Cong second in Punjab

CHANDIGARH, 29 MAY

The AAP won around 45 per cent of municipal wards in Punjab at 7 pm on Friday. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said the people supported AAP's development politics and have defeated the opposition's "politics of hatred."

Punjab State Election Commission data says the AAP won 886 of 1,977 wards. The Congress came second spot by winning 358 wards, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) secured 178 wards while the BJP managed to win 153 wards in the civic elections.

Independent candidates performed fairly well in these urban local body elections by winning in 246 wards. The BSP won six wards.

The counting of votes was still underway and the results for around 130 wards are yet to be declared.

Elections to 102 municipal bodies comprising 1,897 wards across eight municipal corporations of Mohali, Bathinda, Abohar, Barnala, Kapurthala, Moga, Batala and Pathankot along with 75 municipal councils and 19 nagar panchayats were held using ballot papers on 26 May, recording a voter turnout of around 63.94 per cent. *— PTI*

—SCREENGRAB

Lucknow rail platform shed collapses, 3 injured

LUCKNOW, 29 MAY

Three people, including a travelling ticket examiner (TTE), were injured after part of a platform shed collapsed at the Lucknow Junction Railway Station on Friday at 8.15am. Passengers waiting on platform five saw a large section of the shed fall towards the tracks, causing panic. The injured, identified as TTE Amit, and passengers Akhilesh and Sahil, were rescued by railway personnel, police, and RPF officers. All were hospitalised; the TTE suffered a serious leg injury, and others had shoulder and hand injuries. The shed was being renovated. Poor maintenance is being suspected as a cause. A committee is investigating the incident including possible negligence. —*PTI*

—SCREENGRAB

Court sends Twisha case suspects to CBI custody

BHOPAL, 29 MAY

The Bhopal District court on Friday sent former judge Giribala Singh and her son Samarth Singh to CBI custody till 2 June for interrogation. This is part of its probe into the alleged dowry death of model-turned-actor Twisha Sharma. Giribala Singh's lawyer said that they have no objection to the CBI's request. The CBI had arrested Giribala Singh, on Thursday, a day after the MP High Court cancelled her anticipatory bail in the case. Twisha, who was married to Bhopal resident Samarth Singh in December 2020, died on 12 May. Her family alleged that she was harassed for dowry by her husband and in-laws. The case involves serious allegations under the BNS, 2023, and the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. —*PTI*

Gujarat lions isolated to check Babesia virus

GANDHINAGAR, 29 MAY

Authorities have started isolating lions within a 10km radius of infection zones in Gujarat following the death of lion cubs from suspected Babesia virus. Samples from dead cubs have been sent for testing. The government has isolated 17 lions and is conducting tick-removal operations in Gir Sanctuary. Chief Minister Bhupendra was informed that four cubs had died from Babesia infection, transmitted via ticks. The forest department confirmed that lions at Sasan hospital are unaffected, but emergency plans are in place, including advanced diagnostic labs, rescue cages, and tranquiliser guns to manage any affected lions. —*PTI*

Bishnoi gang sent threat letter last year: Canada cops

TORONTO, 29 MAY

Canadian police disclosed that the Lawrence Bishnoi gang sent a threat letter last year claiming that around 1,000 of its members are ready to carry out shootings across Canada. The letter was delivered on 13 August 2025 to an Abbotsford police station, disclosed during an immigration deportation hearing. Officer Kevin St Louis explained the letter outlined the gang's organisation and plans for violence and extortion. The Abbotsford Police confirmed receiving the letter, and detectives are investigating its origin. The Bishnoi group, a designated terrorist organisation in Canada, targets South Asian communities, with extortion demands often made via WhatsApp, referencing Bishnoi or Goldy Brar. —*PTI*

Cooling-off period not needed for ex-judges: Law Minister

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal has rejected the idea of a mandatory "cooling-off period" for retired judges before they take up assignments from the government, saying there is no case for restricting "judicious and mentally sound" people from continuing to work.

In an exclusive interview to PTI on Thursday, Meghwal, who is a minister of state (independent charge) in the Union ministry of law and justice, said there were "two schools of thought" within the judiciary itself on whether retired judges should immediately take up assignments. He pointed to vacancies in tribunals and stressed the need for experienced adjudicators in bodies like the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT).

The remarks come amid a continuing debate over post-retirement appointments of judges and concerns raised by sections of the legal community and opposition parties over judicial independence and possible conflicts of interest.

Besides tribunals, retired judges are also appointed to bodies like the NHRC, Lokpal, Law Commission and the Press Council of India, and committees and commissions set up for specific law making and recommendatory exercises and investigations. Meghwal said the debate around cooling-off periods was often based on the perception that judges may be rewarded for favourable judgments after retirement, but added that such assumptions were misplaced.

He also said that many retired judges themselves refuse to take up new assignments, saying they are more interested in arbitration work.While the minister didn't specify any reason, arbitration is seen as a much more lucrative job for retired judges with fees said to be running into lakhs per sitting for some.

Meghwal also highlighted the shortage of personnel in tribunals, saying many posts remained vacant despite hectic efforts by the government to persuade retired judges to join. — PTI

HCs must give reserved verdicts within 3 months: SC

Orders on bail must be given the same day

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

Observing that delay causes irreparable loss to litigants, the Supreme Court on Friday directed high courts to pronounce judgements within three months from the date of reserving order, with faster decisions in cases of personal liberty.

Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Baghchi issued the directions on a plea alleging delay in uploading a high court judgment.

The bench said orders in bail applications should be pronounced the same day, and if they are reserved, they must be pronounced and uploaded the next day.

The SC said that an order of bail or sentence suspension should be communicated to the jail authorities as soon as it is pronounced and the undertrial/convict should be released preferably the same day or at most the next day.

The SC exercising its extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution said if only the operative portion of judgment is pronounced, the detailed verdict must be uploaded within 15 days.

The SC directed that if a judgment is not pronounced within four months of reserving order, then parties can approach the Chief Justice of the high court to assign the matter to another bench.

- The SC said that an order of bail or sentence suspension should be communicated to the jail authorities as soon as it is given and the undertrial or convict should be released preferably the same day or at the most the next day

The bench said when a detailed judgment is pronounced in open court, then the verdict must be uploaded on the website within 24 hours.

The Supreme Court clarified that directions passed by it do not intend to cast aspersions on any judge or an HC judgement. — PTI

SC refuses to interfere with Swami's bail

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

The Supreme Court refused to interfere with the Allahabad HC order granting anticipatory bail to Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati in a case registered against him under the POCSO Act.

Justices Sundresh and N Singh dismissed the plea of complainant Ashutosh Brahma chari.

On 25 March, the HC granted anticipatory bail to Swami Avimuktesh waranand and his disciple Mukundanand Brahma chari in a POCSO case. However, the HC restrained both the first informant and the applicants (Swami Avimuk teshwaranand and the disciple) from making any statements before the media. — PTI

Six killed as bridge crashes in UP, engineer suspended

HAMIRPUR, 29 MAY

Six labourers were killed and three others were injured when an under-construction bridge over the Betwa River in Uttar Pradesh's Hamirpur district crashed after a storm early on Friday, officials said. An Assistant Engineer has been suspended in this connection for negligence, an official of the UP State Bridge Corporation Ltd said.

The incident occurred at around 3 am between Parsani and Kandaur villages when several labourers engaged in bridge construction were sleeping on the upper portion of a slab which suddenly gave way.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced a financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh each for the families of the deceased and Rs 50,000 for the injured.

The incident occurred around 3 am on Friday between Parsani and Kandaur villages in Uttar Pradesh's Hamirpur district —*PTI*

Hamirpur District Magistrate Abhishek Goyal told reporters that the bridge construction was being carried out by a private company. Goyal said the IMD had issued warnings on Thursday regarding storms and rainfall.

Announcements were made in villages to alert residents and workers about the weather, he said.

Three labourers who were trapped under a pillar were rescued. The injured were admitted to the district hospital in Hamirpur. — *PTI*

Op Sindoor star is now Navy Vice Chief

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

Vice Admiral Ajay Kochhar, who supervised naval combat readiness during Operation Sindoor, assumed charge as the 48th Vice Chief of the Indian Navy on Friday, bringing frontline experience to naval headquarters.

Before taking over as the Navy's second-in-command, the officer served as the Commander-in-Chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), India's first and only integrated tri-services theatre command.

Earlier, as the Chief of Staff of the Western Naval Command, he was instrumental in executing the Navy's aggressive forward deployment of critical units during Operation Sindoor.

Vice Admiral Kochhar succeeds Vice Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan, who has been appointed as the next chief of the Western Naval Command.

An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Pune, Vice Admiral Kochhar was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 1 July 1988. A specialist in gunnery and missile systems, he has held a wide range of command, operational, and staff assignments in the last 37 years. He commanded warships Nashak, Vibhuti, and Kirpan, and was the commissioning CO of the frigate Trikand. He also commanded the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya. — *PTI*

Security personnel patrol after a clash between the Tangkhul and Kuki tribes at Litan village, in Ukhrul —*ANI*

Ultras attack convoy in Manipur, 1 killed

IMPHAL, 29 MAY

A truck driver was killed when suspected militants fired at a convoy of vehicles in Manipur's Ukhrul district on Friday, police said.

"A joint team of the BSF, the CRPF and the police were escorting some 15 to 20 trucks towards Ukhrul district when they came under attack near TM Kasom by suspected militants. A truck driver was killed on the spot," an officer said.

The incident happened some 6 km from Shangkai village, where protesters blocked roads, forcing security forces to fire tear gas shells to disperse the mob on Friday.

Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Wednesday had met representatives of the Manipur Truck Owners' Welfare Association, to discuss the law and order situation on National Highways and the movement of goods.

Meanwhile, security forces fired tear gas shells to disperse the protestors who had blocked NH 202 in Manipur's Ukhrul district on Friday, officials said.

People from Shangkai village who were enforcing a shutdown in their area to protest the alleged holding of 14 community members hostage by Naga groups had blocked part of the highway from Imphal to Ukhrul district headquarters. — *PTI*

NEET fee refund: Students' bank details can be updated till 22 June

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

The National Testing Agency has extended till 22 June the deadline for submitting bank account details for the refund of examination fee of candidates who appeared for NEET-UG 2026, which was cancelled amid allegations of paper leak and would be held afresh.

While announcing the re-examination of NEET-UG 2026 on 21 June, the NTA had said no examination fee would be charged from candidates for the fresh test.

The NTA also said that fees already paid by students will be refunded.

The NTA had provided a facility on the NEET (UG)-2026 registration portal for submission of bank account details for processing the fee refund from 22 to 26 May (till 11:50 PM).

In a notice shared on X on Wednesday, the NTA said so far around 13 lakh candidates have updated their bank account details. The agency said the extension has been granted to facilitate candidates who are yet to submit their details.

The NTA said so far around 13 lakh candidates have updated their bank account details —*ANI*

"The Centre's decision to use the IAF to ferry NEET question papers reflects admin failure. The armed forces protect the country's borders. It is not their job to cover up for the incompetence of the NTA and the Education Ministry

-Sanjay Raut
Shiv Sena (UBT) leader

Candidates can log in to the NEET (UG)-2026 registration portal using their credentials and access the refund link to submit their bank account details.

The NTA also said candidates may upload a cancelled cheque to ensure accuracy of the bank account information.

"Once the bank account details are submitted, the same shall be treated as final and no modification shall be permitted thereafter," the NTA added. The facility for submission of bank account details will be available till June 22 (up to 11:50 PM), the notice said. — *PTI*

CBSE re-evaluation portal opening on 1 June

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

The CBSE on Friday said the portal for post-result activities, including verification and re-evaluation of answer books, will be operational from 1 June.

In a statement on X, the Board said the decision was taken to ensure a "transparent and glitch-free process" for students applying for verification and re-evaluation of answer books.

The Board said the move aims to ensure the "highest standards and protocols of evaluation."

"Students who may have queries may contact the CBSE Tele-Counseling Helpline 1800 11 8004 and Email-resultcbse2026@cbseshiksha.in," the Board said.

The clarification comes after the Board said earlier that the portal for applications for verification and re-evaluation of answer books is expected to go live by 29 May.The development comes after concerns raised by some students and parents over the On-Screen Marking (OSM) system. — *PTI*

SUCCESS AT LAST

Sons of fisher, farmer crack Odisha civils

BERHAMPUR, 29 MAY

The sons of a fisherman and of a farmer in Odisha's Ganjam district have cracked the state civil services examination, the results of which were declared recently.

T Narasingha Patro, 27, of Gosaninuagaon in Berhampur, the son of farmer T Krushna Chandra Patro, secured the 24th rank in the exam. After failing in three attempts, Patro cleared the state-level top exam.

Kanhu Charan Behera, 27, son of a fisherman in the Sorada area of Ganjam district, bagged the 56th rank in the general category.

Many candidates who cleared the Odisha civils prepared themselves —*PTI*

After failing thrice, his father Kali Charan, who earned a living by fishing, wanted him to settle for any job, said Behera.

Behera started coaching high school students in his small room in Sorada to help his family. Besides meeting his own expenditure for preparing for the civil service, Behera said he also assisted in running his family.

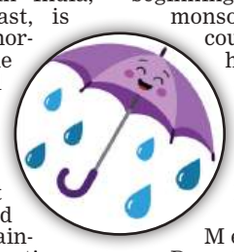
He focused on self-studies through the internet and social media. Hard work along with his parents' blessings, helped me crack the exam, Behera said.

Itishree Jena, a resident of Aska town, was overwhelmed after learning that she had won the tenth rank in the Odisha Civil Services examination. "It's a dream come true," said the 25-year-old, who cracked the exam in her second attempt. She prepared for the exam on her own using the internet. "Before the main exam held in January-February, my father, Prakash Chandra Jena, a small businessman, was hospitalised," she said. — *PTI*

INDIA MAY SEE LOWER THAN AVERAGE RAINFALL THIS MONSOON: IMD

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

The June-September southwest monsoon seasonal rainfall over most of the rainfed agriculture areas in India, except the Northeast, is likely to be below normal this year, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in a statement.



If the monsoon season sees rainfall less than 90 per cent of the long-period average (LPA), the rainfall recorded over a particular region for a given interval, such as a month or season, averaged over a long period of time, typically 30 to 50 years, the India Meteorological Department classifies it as 'deficient'.

The monsoon's onset over Kerala, which marks the beginning of the southwest monsoon season in the country, is expected to happen in the next seven days, said Director General of Meteorology at the IMD, Mrutyunjay Mohapatra.

The India Meteorological Department also stressed that in June, above normal monthly maximum temperatures are likely over most parts of the country. — *PTI*

TOO HOT, TOO HUMID:
WHY THIS HEATWAVE IS DEADLY

A woman bathes a child on a hot summer day at the Sangam, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh —PTI

India and Pakistan are no strangers to heat. This time of the year is the worst, as heat peaks before the monsoon brings cooler conditions from June.

But this year's heat is something else. Intense, sustained heat began in mid-April. Daily maximum temperatures have topped 46°C in many locations, with some areas running around 5–8°C above seasonal norms.

The heat has driven record demand for electricity in India as people turn on air conditioners – and worsened drought conditions affecting more than a million square kilometres.

When extreme heat combines with humidity, it can be lethal. Human bodies cannot cool themselves easily. The heatwave has claimed at least 37 lives in India and 10 in Pakistan. These figures are likely to be a major underestimate.

A man cools himself under a public water tap on the outskirts of Amritsar, Punjab; A man bathes his cattle to provide relief from the scorching summer heat on the outskirts of Amritsar —PTI

WHY IS IT SO HOT?

One reason it's been so bad this year is due to persistent high-pressure weather systems. When these systems sit in place, they make heatwaves more likely by suppressing cloud formation and reducing the chance of cooling rain. This year, strong high-pressure systems have lingered over parts of India and Pakistan, trapping hot air near the surface and allowing temperatures to rise.

With less rain, soils dry out. Drier soils make things worse, because less heat is used up evaporating moisture in the soil and more goes into heating the land. High pressure systems can often hang around for many days.

It's often worst in cities, as concrete and asphalt absorb heat during the day and release it slowly overnight. This means cities stay hotter overnight, boosting health risks for people without access to cooling.

The big reason is climate change. As the world gets steadily hotter, heatwaves get worse. Estimates from World Weather Attribution suggest the first big heatwave from 15–29 April 2026 was made about three times more likely and about 1°C hotter due to climate change.

At current global levels of global warming (~1.4°C), this means the subcontinent faces similar events about once every five years. At present, we're tracking towards 2.6°C of warming by 2100. At that level, heatwaves would hit every 2-3 years and be 2.2°C hotter.

HUMIDITY MAKES HEAT MUCH MORE LETHAL

Many parts of India and Pakistan are intensely humid. When sustained extreme heat arrives, humidity acts to intensify the threat to health. Humidity levels are worsening in parts of the region.

That's because it's harder to cool down naturally in humid conditions. Human bodies use sweating as the main method of cooling. When these beads of warm water evaporate off the skin, heat is carried away.

Humid air makes sweating a much less effective method of cooling. When the air already holds a lot of moisture, it takes longer for sweat to evaporate. The body can keep getting hotter even as it sweats.

This is why scientists are increasingly concerned about lethal humidity – when heat and humidity combine to rapidly sicken or kill.

Dying like this is deeply unpleasant. It begins with the core body temperature rising. People sweat more to try to shed the heat, but sweating doesn't work well. If there's no reprieve, the body temperature can keeps rising past 40°C and heatstroke can set in, damaging the brain and other organs. This can be fatal without care.

To gauge the combined danger of heat and humidity, scientists use measures such as the wet-bulb temperature. This reflects how much cooling is possible through sweating.

It used to be thought the limit for human survival was a wet-bulb temperature of 35°C. But new research shows heat and humidity can be lethal across a range of temperature and humidity combinations.

For example, for older people who are outdoors, 35°C and 90 per cent humidity is as deadly as 45°C and 30 per cent. For instance, even healthy 18-35 year olds are at risk of dying with humidity of 40 per cent and temperatures of 45°C.

A THREAT FACED UNEQUALLY

The risks of heat and humidity are not faced equally. Wealthier people can turn on the air conditioner and avoid going outdoors.

But poorer people in informal settlements can't escape the heat. Neither can construction workers, farmers, delivery riders and others doing physically demanding work outdoors.

There's another risk too. The body needs cooler temperatures overnight to recover from intense heat. When the heat continues overnight, there's no relief.

While cities are hotter than the surrounding areas, rural communities still face threats from heat and humidity. That's because more work tends to be outdoors, healthcare is often far away and cooling is limited.

WHEN COULD RELIEF COME?

When the monsoon arrives, it usually brings cooler conditions. Cloud cover and widespread rainfall help lower daytime temperatures, though humidity often stays high. The monsoon usually arrives in early June in southern India and covers the whole country by mid-July. In Pakistan, the monsoon typically arrives later, usually beginning in early July. The monsoon often lasts till September.

Relief can't come too soon for the region. Unfortunately, it won't be the last threat. But as climate change ramps up, extreme heat and humidity will hit these nations more often – and more severely. – *The Conversation*

SALAR

Hormuz exposes China's Indian Ocean vulnerability

China's maritime vulnerability begins at the Strait of Hormuz rather than the Strait of Malacca, creating a new arena of strategic competition in the Indian Ocean among Beijing, India, France and the US, according to a report by the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies.

Released ahead of the three-day Shangri-La Dialogue security summit that opened in Singapore on Friday, the report says the Indian Ocean Region is re-emerging as a key strategic theatre after decades of relative calm following the end of the Cold War.

The report, titled 'Asia Pacific Regional Security Assessment', argues that China's dependence on energy supplies moving through the Indian Ocean has made the region increasingly important to Beijing's security calculations, while also exposing vulnerabilities that rival powers could seek to exploit.

The study examines strategic competition around major maritime choke points linking the Middle East and Asia, with particular focus on the Strait of Hormuz and the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS), also known as the Malacca Strait, which carries a substantial share of global energy shipments.

Recent developments around Hormuz have highlighted the growing strategic importance of these sea lanes. It cited Iran's participation in the Maritime Security Belt 2026 exercise with China and Russia, including naval drills conducted in the Strait of Hormuz earlier this year.

The drills took place before the war involving Iran, the US, and Israel, which disrupted shipping and energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz.

The report challenges the widely discussed notion of China's "Malacca Dilemma", which focuses on the vulnerability of Chinese trade and energy flows through the Malacca Strait.

While the narrow waterway is critical, the report argues that China's actual vulnerability begins much further west because a significant portion of its imported energy passes through the Strait of Hormuz before entering the Indian Ocean and reaching East Asia.

Any disruption would affect not only China but also other Asian economies.

China faces greater strategic challenges in the Indian Ocean than in waters closer to its coastline because it must operate alongside established regional actors such as India, France and the US - all of which maintain significant military capabilities and partnerships across the region.

While the People's Liberation Army Navy has expanded considerably over the past two decades and continues to develop capabilities to protect Chinese shipping routes, Beijing's reach near Hormuz remains comparatively limited, according to the study.

To address those vulnerabilities, China has steadily increased defence engagement with Indian Ocean littoral states through military exercises, security cooperation, arms exports and broader political and economic partnerships.

While Beijing is unlikely in the foreseeable future to prevent India, France or the US from operating through key Indian Ocean choke points, it is gradually building operational experience, military partnerships and a more sustained presence aimed at protecting its interests and reducing its dependence on routes vulnerable to disruption, the report says.

Whether Beijing can sustain a military presence comparable to those maintained by India, France and the US remains uncertain, it adds.

France continues to be a major player in the western Indian Ocean through its military presence in Africa and on Reunion Island, while India views the broader Indian Ocean as a primary area of strategic responsibility and has sought to position itself as a leading regional security partner.

New Delhi has expanded naval exercises, defence cooperation and security partnerships across the region, while the US has maintained a long-standing military presence centred on the Diego Garcia base and increased engagement with Indian Ocean states.

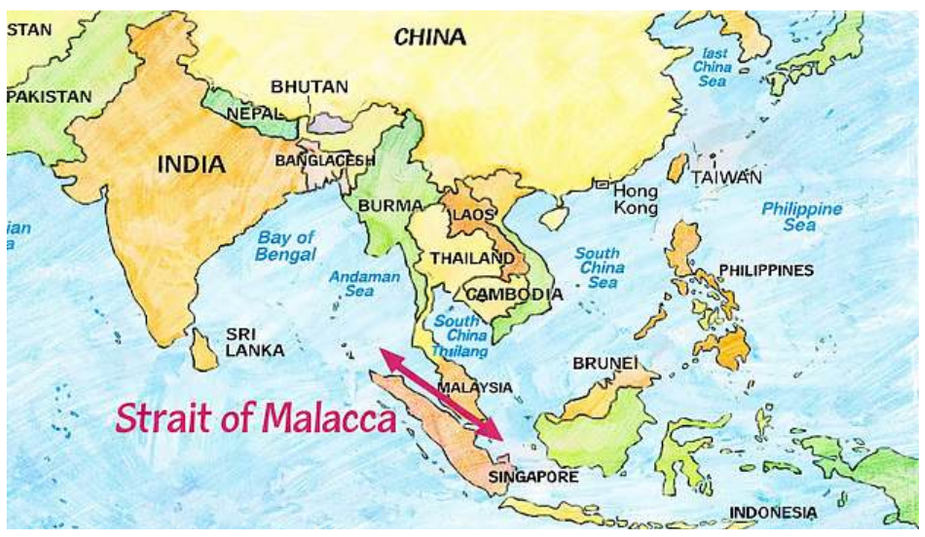
The military presence and partnerships of India, France and the US provide them with significant ability to conduct surveillance, project power and coordinate maritime security activities across key Indian Ocean choke points.

It also notes that the three countries do not always share identical threat perceptions or strategic priorities, limiting the scope for deeper coordination.

For US, which remains locked in strategic competition with Beijing in the western Pacific and is engaged in conflict with Iran in the western Indian Ocean, China's growing military capabilities in the region could be an additional source of geopolitical friction, the report says.

A growing defence market, expanding infrastructure, energy dependencies and deeper political relationships are likely to ensure that China's engagement in the Indian Ocean continues to increase.

As its economic and security interests in the Indian Ocean continue to expand, China is likely to deepen its military presence, with aircraft carriers expected to play a growing role in protecting sea lanes stretching from the Strait of Hormuz to East Asia, the report said. —*PTI*



The study examines strategic competition around major maritime choke points linking the Middle East and Asia, with particular focus on the Strait of Hormuz and the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, also known as the Malacca Strait —AI

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Bengal educational institutes see rapid expansion of RSS-affiliates

Barely three weeks after the BJP's emphatic victory in West Bengal, the ideological churn inside the state's educational institutes has begun unfolding with remarkable speed, as organisations affiliated to the RSS move aggressively to expand their footprint across campuses, staff rooms and academic networks long dominated by the Left and the TMC.

From college canteens in north Bengal to university departments in Kolkata, a quiet but unmistakable realignment is underway.

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), which spent decades as a marginal force in Bengal's student politics, is suddenly finding itself flooded with membership requests, WhatsApp enquiries and invitations to form campus units.

Among teachers, professors and non-teaching staff, the Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal and the Akhil Bharatiya Rashtriya Shaikshik Mahasangh (ABRSM) are also reporting an unprecedented spike in outreach after the 4 May election results altered Bengal's ideological and political landscape for the first time in nearly half a century.

For years, the RSS ecosystem believed Bengal's educational institutes were structurally hostile terrain where Left influence survived long after its electoral decline and where the TMC eventually built its own patronage networks through student unions, recruitment channels and campus-level control.

The BJP's victory has finally broken what one Sangh organiser described as the "psychological resistance barrier".

"It is from the land of Bengal where nationalism, which is Hindu nationalism, and 'Vande Mataram' (song) originated. For several decades, there was an effort to ensure that we forget our history, culture and roots. Now Bengal has decided to go back to its roots," senior RSS leader Jishnu Basu told PTI.

ABVP leaders claimed the student body had a presence in only 96 colleges before the election results. In just over two weeks, they said that number has crossed 400, with informal networks springing up even before formal membership drives will begin on 9 June.

"Many students from various colleges and universities are in touch with us and want to join ABVP and open ABVP units in their colleges or universities. But unlike TMCP, the students' wing of the TMC, joining ABVP requires following proper procedure and scrutiny before induction," ABVP South Bengal secretary Nilkantha Bhattacharya told PTI.

In many campuses, instead of immediately announcing committees, ABVP organisers have opened WhatsApp groups, creating digital spaces for interested students while screening potential entrants.

ABVP leaders claimed the student body had a presence in only 96 colleges before the election results. In just over two weeks, they said that number has crossed 400 —PTI

Unlike the BJP, which has temporarily halted mass induction amid fears of an influx of opportunistic entrants from rival parties, RSS affiliates are expanding carefully but steadily, attempting to balance rapid growth with ideological filtration.

ABVP leaders privately admitted that many students now approaching them were until recently associated with the TMCP, and in some places with SFI, the students' arm of the CPI(M). But they insisted that controversial figures accused of extortion, intimidation or involvement in admission rackets will not be accommodated.

The Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal, primarily involved in education policy and intellectual discourse, has traditionally been less focused on numerical expansion. But its office-bearers argued that Bengal requires exceptional mobilisation because the state resisted implementation of the National Education Policy for years, despite many of its recommendations emerging from consultations involving 'shikshan mandal' thinkers.

The ABRMS claimed its membership in Bengal, once below 10,000, may now cross one lakh as schoolteachers, college staff, and university employees increasingly seek association with groups perceived to be aligned with the new power structure.

"Our network already has a presence across most blocks and educational circles in the state, but the post-election momentum has dramatically accelerated recruitment in districts where Sangh affiliates earlier struggled to gain institutional legitimacy," state general secretary Bapi Pramanik told PTI.

Political observers saw the development as part of a deeper ideological consolidation project accompanying the BJP's historic win in Bengal.

For the Sangh, capturing administrative power was only one milestone. The more enduring battle, its strategists have long argued internally, lies inside classrooms, curriculum, teachers' associations and student consciousness.

That is why, even as the BJP leadership publicly speaks of governance and development, the Sangh ecosystem is quietly investing organisational energy into educational institutions, historically among the toughest arenas for Hindutva politics in Bengal.

The immediate impact may remain organisational. But the longer-term implications could reshape the ideological character of Bengal's campuses in ways unseen since the Left's rise through colleges and universities in the 1960s and 1970s.

Already, in several districts, teachers once reluctant to publicly associate with Sangh-linked bodies are attending closed-door orientation sessions, while students who previously avoided ABVP rallies for fear of political isolation are now volunteering to organise events themselves.

Opposition parties dismissed the surge as a temporary byproduct of regime change and argued that institutional influence built over decades cannot be dismantled within weeks. Yet even critics privately conceded that the change in mood inside campuses is palpable.

For the RSS and its affiliates, Bengal's educational institutes are no longer merely hostile territory where survival itself was an achievement. After years of operating from the margins, they now sense a rare political opening to move from resistance to dominance within Bengal's academic space.

Whether that transformation sustains itself beyond the post-election euphoria may determine if Bengal's next political generation continues to inherit the state's ideological traditions or gradually shifts towards a nationalist political culture. —*PTI*

US Iran near deal, but await Trump's nod

Trump lifts Hormuz blockade ahead of meet

WASHINGTON, 29 MAY

US and Iranian negotiators reached a tentative agreement on Thursday to extend the ceasefire in the three-month-old war by 60 days and start a new round of talks on Iran's nuclear programme, according to a US source.

Iran did not immediately confirm any deal. Vice President JD Vance on Thursday evening confirmed there was a tentative agreement, but said it was unclear if President Donald Trump would approve it. "It is hard to say exactly when or if the President is going to sign."

However, Trump posted on Truth Social that the US would be ending its naval blockade on Iranian ports and the Strait of Hormuz, signalling progress in the talks. Iran had already closed the Strait, through which nearly a fifth of the world's oil once passed, but Trump blocked it again, turning back hundreds of ships that Iran had allowed to pass.

"The Hormuz Strait must be immediately open, no tolls, for unrestricted shipping traffic, in both directions," Trump posted ahead of a White House Situation Room meeting with his advisors where he's expected to make a "final determination" on the deal.

In his post, Trump said that Iran's highly enriched uranium will be removed by the US or China under Iran and International Atomic Energy Agency's supervision.

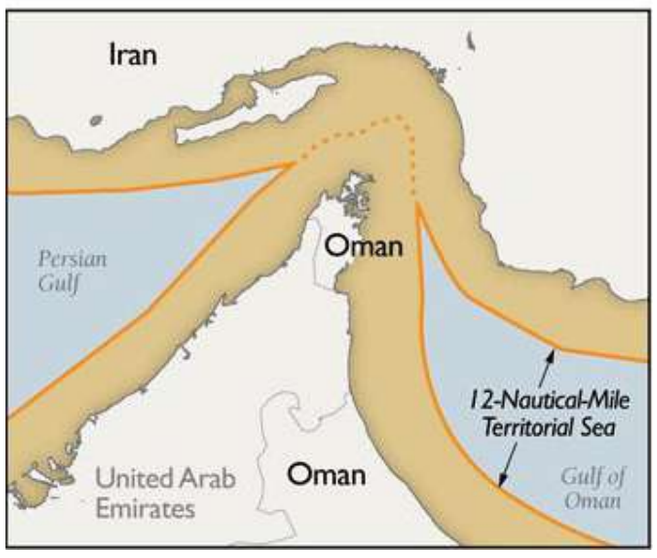
Furthermore, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio also met Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar in Washington. Pakistan has been acting as the mediator between US and Iran.

Notably, key issues remain unresolved. The memorandum states that Iran will not be able to impose tolls on the Strait and that Iran will have to remove all mines from the vital waterway within 30 days, according to the US official. However, Iran has been justifying its clam to the Strait, along with Oman.

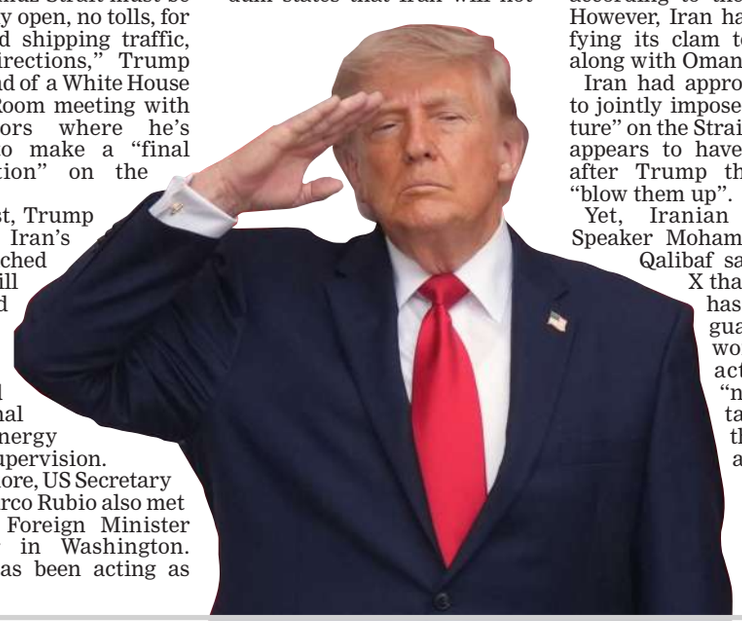
Iran had approached Oman to jointly impose a "fee structure" on the Strait, but Muscat appears to have backed out after Trump threatened to "blow them up".

Yet, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf said Friday on X that his country has "no trust in guarantees or words," only actions, and "no step will be taken before the other side acts."

—*AGENCIES*



Iran argues that its 'fee system' doesn't violate international law if Oman signs up, as nations can claim 12 nautical miles as territorial waters —*IRIB*



Operation Economic Fury: US sanctions Iran's 'shadow oil'

WASHINGTON, 29 MAY

The US on Thursday announced a fresh round of sanctions targeting Iran's so-called "shadow oil economy", accusing Tehran of illicit oil revenues to finance the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), regional proxy groups and military activities across West Asia.

"The US is targeting the Iranian regime's dark fleet and illicit oil networks under Economic Fury," US Department of State spokesperson Tommy Pigott said on X.

According to the US Department of State, the sanctions target entities, individuals and vessels allegedly involved in transporting Iranian petroleum, as well as networks accused of helping Tehran generate "billions of dollars" in oil revenue.

Eight entities and eight vessels have been identified as "blocked property" for transporting Iranian petrol or petroleum products. t also sanctioned three entities and one individual allegedly linked to trade in Iranian-origin petrochemicals.

Simultaneously, the US imposed sanctions on a "Hong Kong-based" oil sales network accused of moving "tens of millions of barrels of Iranian oil worth billions of dollars." —*ANI*

Israel kills 3 in Gaza's Khan Younis

GAZA CITY, 29 MAY

At least three Palestinians were killed early on Friday after an Israeli drone strike targeted the city of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, according to Palestinian Wafa News Agency. People claimed that Israel did not warn residents ahead of the strike.

The strike came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) would move to control 70 per cent of the Gaza Strip, up from the current 60 per cent. The October ceasefire between Israel and Hamas mandates that only 53 per cent of the Strip should be controlled by the IDF. Netanyahu also said that a "plan for voluntary emigration from Gaza" would begin "at the proper time". —*Agencies*

IDF CROSSES LITANI AS ISRAELI BOMBS KILLS DOZEN IN LEBANON

TEL AVIV/ BEIRUT, 29 MAY

Israeli Prime Benjamin Netanyahu said on Friday that Israeli forces have crossed Lebanon's Litani River, in one of the most significant escalations in the conflict with Hezbollah. The Litani River served as a demarcation line, where Israel occupied nearly 15 per cent of the country's land to set up a "security zone".

"Our forces have crossed the Litani, they have moved up to the commanding terrain. We are operating in Beirut, in the Beqaa, across the entire front and are hitting Hezbollah head on," Netanyahu said in a statement released by his office.

The comments came as Israel continued to bombard Lebanon, while officials from both countries met in Washington. At least 19 people were killed on Thursday and Friday by the bombardment, as Lebanese officials are expected to ask their Israeli counterparts to halt the bombing.

At least 3,000 people have been killed in Lebanon, and a million displaced. —*Agencies*

UN BLACKLISTS ISRAELI, RUSSIAN ARMIES FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

UNITED NATIONS, 29 MAY

An annual United Nations report on conflict-related sexual violence has, for the first time, placed Israeli armed and security forces on its blacklist over alleged abuse of Palestinian detainees. Russian armed and security forces were also blacklisted for alleged sexual violence against prisoners of war and civilians during the Ukraine conflict.

The 35-page report listed 77 government and non-government entities accused of sexual violence in conflicts across 12 countries and noted a sharp rise in cases in 2025 from 2024. Hamas remained on the blacklist over the 7 October, 2023 attack on Israel.

The report documented alleged rape, gangrape, forced nudity, invasive searches and physical abuse against Palestinians detained in Israel and occupied territories.

Israel rejected the allegations, calling them "unsubstantiated lies. Israeli envoy Danny Danon criticised Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for placing Israel alongside militant groups.

Russia's UN envoy Vassily Nebenzia accused the UN of portraying Moscow unfairly. —*PTI*

Indian-American wins National Spelling Bee

WASHINGTON, 29 MAY

Shrey Parikh, a 14-year-old Indian-American student from California, won the Scripps National Spelling Bee after correctly spelling 32 of 35 words in 90 seconds, beating 12-year-old Ishaan Gupta. Parikh, an eighth grader from Day Creek Intermediate School, also beat the previous record of 29 words in 2024. He said, "Spelling fast is what I do every day." Parikh, who previously finished 89th in 2022 and third in 2024, receives USD 50,000, a medal, the Scripps Cup, and additional prizes.

The competition included 247 participants from across the US and internationally. —*PTI*

Russian drone crashes in Romania, injures 2

KYIV, 29 MAY

A Russian drone that was part of an overnight attack on Ukraine crashed into an apartment building in eastern Romania, injuring two people, Romanian authorities said Friday.

NATO member Romania asked the alliance for a faster transfer of anti-drone capabilities in response to the crash in the city of Galati. The Foreign Ministry called the drone's flight a "serious violation of international law".

Romanian President Nicusor Dan convened the NATO members' top defence body for a meeting on Friday to discuss the implications of what he called "the worst incident to hit the national territory" since Russia invaded Ukraine.

Although Russian drones have frequently incurred on Romania's airspace since it began the invasion in 2022, this is the first time that there have been injuries in the country.

NATO members quickly condemned the attack. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Russia "has crossed yet another line... in its war of aggression", while NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte expressed "absolute solidarity" with Romanian President.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, meanwhile, said his country was "ready to support Romania in whatever way is necessary under these circumstances" and said that sanctions on Russia should be expanded to ensure that the war is not expanded. He also confirmed that the drone that crashed in Romania was a 'shahed' drone.

In all, Ukrainian forces shot down 217 drones overnight on Friday, according to the country's Air Force. In total, Russia attacked with 232 drones and one ballistic missile. Hits were recorded in 14 areas. —*PTI*

A stray drone crashed into an apartment in Romania's Galati. This is the first time injuries were recorded in the NATO member's country —*x*

NONE INJURED

Bezos' Blue Origin rocket explodes on launch pad

CAPE CANAVERAL, 29 MAY

A rocket belonging to Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin exploded during a test at the launch pad on Thursday night, shaking nearby homes and briefly painting the sky orange.

Blue Origin said its New Glenn rocket exploded during an engine-firing test being conducted ahead of a satellite launch planned for next week, as part of the Amazon Leo constellation in orbit.

No one was hurt, according to officials at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station.

"It's too early to know the root cause but we're already working to find it," Bezos said via X. "Very rough day, but we'll rebuild whatever needs rebuilding and get back to flying. It's worth it."

It was only the third flight of the rocket that Blue Origin intends to use to launch landers to the moon for NASA, including the landers that will take astronauts to the lunar surface.

NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman promised to provide information on any impacts to the Artemis program, including the moon base that he recently outlined.

Space Force officials said the explosion would not affect upcoming launches. —*PTI*

US may soon have $250 bill with Donald Trump's face on it

WASHINGTON, 29 MAY

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on Thursday that his department has prepared the design for a USD 250 bill featuring President Donald Trump, anticipating the passage of stalled legislation in Congress to put the president on a new denomination of legal tender.

Bessent said at the White House that authorising the new currency will be up to lawmakers on Capitol Hill, but that "we have created the bill" because "we have to be prepared".

Notably, American law prevents a living person from being used on a dollar bill. However, Bessent insisted there is nothing inappropriate about Trump's visage being part of upcoming the 250th American anniversary.

This comes after Washington Post report Stated that that US Treasurer Brandon Beach, a Trump appointee, has been pushing the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to expedite the process for a new currency note. The Post claimed that the former BEP chief, Patricia Solimene, was reassigned after pushing back. —*PTI*

Bondi to testify on 'Epstein files' behind closed doors

WASHINGTON, 29 MAY

Former US attorney general Pam Bondi is set to testify behind closed doors before House lawmakers investigating the handling of Jeffrey Epstein sexual abuse case files. Lawmakers are expected to question decisions regarding Epstein associates, release of files and possible links to President Donald Trump. Democrats criticised the Justice Department's participation in the interview and demanded video recording, saying a transcript-only session could undermine public trust. —*PTI*

Carney calls for ties with US ahead of FTA renewal

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney called for a new partnership with the US on Thursday, weeks before US President Donald Trump reviews the United States-Mexico-Canada free trade agreement in July. Canada has largely been protected from most of Trump's tariffs by the deal.

Won't accept Americans with Ebola: Kenya court

NAIROBI, 29 MAY

High Court in Nairobi, Kenya on Friday suspended a US plan to establish a quarantine facility for Americans exposed to a rare type of Ebola virus spreading in northeastern Congo, until petitions against it are heard on Tuesday.

An organisation formed to defend Kenya's Constitution, Katiba Institute, and the Kenya Law Society separately challenged any presence of Ebola-related facilities.

A Kenyan doctors' union on Thursday issued a 48-hour strike notice should the country proceed with the deal. It said the US was clear that they would not allow Ebola on their soil and therefore Kenya should not become another "dumping ground."

A US administration official had said on Wednesday that the US was planning to send Americans who are exposed to Ebola while abroad to a new facility in Kenya instead of flying them home.

It was unclear where in Kenya the new facility will be built or whether the Kenyan government has signed off on the plan. —*PTI*

QUOTE of THE DAY

"You can't boo me. I'm the Vice President of the United States

—JD VANCE, US VP,
at the US Air Force graduation ceremony. He noted that corporate leaders are booed when they talk about AI

UK mustn't import millions of Indians, Pakistanis: MP

LONDON, 29 MAY

Independent MP Rupert Lowe has caused controversy after making anti-immigrant comments targeting Indian and Pakistani communities, claiming migrants are taking jobs from British citizens and altering the UK's cultural identity. Lowe, who represents Great Yarmouth and recently launched "Restore Britain" after splitting from Reform UK, said he was unbothered by accusations of racism. He stated, "I don't believe we should import millions of Pakistanis and Indians to do jobs that unemployed Brits should be doing. If that makes me racist, then so be it." Lowe's social media posts accused political parties of allowing "millions of low-skilled migrants," criticised Muslim communities, and linked immigration to "colonisation." —*AGENCIES*

Rescue efforts still on in flooded Laos cave to save 5

XAISOMBOUN, 29 MAY

Rescuers are working to drain water from a flooded cave in Laos to free five villagers trapped for over a week, amid complications from recent rainstorms. Search teams are also hunting for two missing individuals, believed to have entered the cave to search for valuable minerals. The villagers, who entered on 20 May, were trapped when heavy rain caused flooding blocking their exit. Rescue experts from Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, and France are involved, with divers from the 2018 Thailand cave rescue assisting. A video shows the five men; Khamla, Mued, Ee, Ing, and Laen, in good health but dehydrated. —*PTI*

3 injured in Swiss train stabbing

GENEVA, 29 MAY

A man stabbed three people at Winterthur train station in Switzerland Thursday morning, in an incident authorities have described as an "act of terror". The suspect, a 31-year-old Swiss-Turkish dual national, was detained five minutes after police were alerted. He has a history of distributing Islamic State propaganda and was recently released from psychiatric care after making "confused comments". The attack injured three Swiss men. Regional police chief Marius Weyermann confirmed the suspect acted alone, adding, "The attack was an evil act of terror". Winterthur, with about 123,000 residents, is located near Zurich. —*PTI*

Sudan's RSF killed 27 civilians during Eid: Doc group

CAIRO, 29 MAY

A Sudanese medical group has accused forces linked to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces of killing 27 civilians, including elderly people, during attacks on villages in North Kordofan during the Eid al-Adha holiday. The Sudan Doctors Network said the assaults targeted civilian areas with no military presence and worsened an already severe humanitarian crisis caused by the ongoing war. Sudan has been engulfed in conflict since April 2023 after tensions between the army and the RSF escalated into full-scale war. The Kordofan region has become a major battleground, with repeated clashes over strategic areas rich in oil and gold. —*PTI*

Gold rebounds ₹1,600, silver jumps ₹5,000

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

Gold prices increased by Rs 1,600 to Rs 1.62 lakh per 10 grams, amid global optimism over a US-Iran preliminary deal and seasonal demand. Silver surged Rs 5,000 to Rs 2,74,700 per kg. Hareesh V from Geojit Investments said, "Gold and silver prices have edged higher as markets assess US-Iran ceasefire developments and the US Fed's interest rate outlook." Internationally, spot gold gained nearly 1 per cent to USD 4,530.72 per ounce. The US and Iran reportedly agreed to extend the ceasefire by 60 days, with Iran expected to normalise traffic through the Strait of Hormuz within 30 days. The final deal is awaited —*PTI*

Rupee gains 53P to close at 95.05 as US dollar falls

MUMBAI, 29 MAY

The rupee appreciated 53 paise to close at 95.05 on Friday, buoyed by optimism over a US-Iran peace deal. Forex traders cited the USD/INR pair's appreciation following adecline in crude oil prices and a fall in the US dollar, after the US and Iran agreed to extend a ceasefire for 60 days. The rupee opened at 95.77, hitting an intraday high of 94.97 and a low of 95.78. On Wednesday is was 95.58. Anuj Choudhary, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said, "The rupee may trade with a slight positive bias, supported by easing crude prices, though escalations could pressurise it." —*PTI*

—TESLA

Tesla brings Model Y Premium at ₹50.89L to India

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

Continuing its product portfolio expansion drive in India, American electric carmaker Tesla on Friday introduced the 2026 Model Y Premium rear-wheel drive in India, priced at Rs 50.89 lakh, its most affordable offering so far.

The introduction of Model Y Premium rear-wheel drive in India follows the launch of the company's second model, a three-row six-seater SUV Model YL priced at Rs 61.99 lakh last month.

Tesla made its much-awaited entry into India last year, launching its Model Y priced at Rs 59.89 lakh.

"Tesla will keep investing in the country to create a seamless EV experience, with more retailers, after-sales services and charging locations coming soon," Tesla Senior Director Isabel Fan said.

The Model Y Premium rear-wheel drive, a new variant of Model Y -- the best-selling EV as of March 2026, introduces a suite of enhancements, elevating both performance and interior sophistication, the company said.

Delivery of the Model Y Premium rear-wheel drive will start in July 2026. —*PTI*

RBI projects India's growth at 6.9% in FY27

Annual report terms GDP growth as 'resilient' despite war

MUMBAI, 29 MAY

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) latest Annual Report projects a resilient 6.9 per cent real GDP growth in 2026-27 (FY27). However, the RBI warned that inflation could intensify due to global uncertainty, supply disruptions, and elevated crude oil prices.

The RBI noted that geopolitical risks are "the dominant drag on global growth in 2026," with the conflict in West Asia leading to upward revisions in global inflation forecasts and downside risks to trade and financial markets.

On inflation, the central bank projected Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation at 4.6 per cent in 2026-27, compared to 2.1 per cent in 2025-26.

The report also warned of possible spillovers to input and wage costs from exchange-rate volatility. Despite the uncertain global environment, the report highlighted strong domestic demand, a healthy banking sector, as well as sustained government capital expenditure.

RBI'S FY26 BALANCE SHEET SIZE GROWS

"The healthy balance sheets of the corporate and banking sectors, along with the government's continued thrust on capital expenditure, bode well for India's strong growth trajectory," the RBI report said.

The RBI's balance sheet expanded to Rs 91.97 lakh crore at the end of March 2026, up 20.6 per cent year-on-year, driven by a rise in domestic investments, gold, and foreign investments.

The balance sheet size increased by Rs 15,71,699.15 crore from Rs 76,25,421.93 crore as of 31 March 2025 to Rs 91,97,121.08 crore as of 31 March 2026.

The increase on the assets side was due to a rise in domestic investments, gold and foreign investments by 44.9 per cent, 63.8 per cent and 7.9 per cent, respectively.

India remained the fastest-growing major economy in FY26, with GDP growth estimated at 7.6 per cent, comapred to 7.1 per cent during FY25. —*Agencies*

Banks see 10,000 frauds involving Rs 48,000 cr in FY26

MUMBAI, 29 MAY

According to the RBI's annual report on Friday, bank fraud cases more than halved in 2025-26 (FY26), dropping to 10,114 from 23,722 the previous year (FY25). However, the cost involved jumped significantly, rising from Rs 32,803 crore in FY25 to Rs 48,021 crore in FY26.

An assessment of bank group-wise fraud cases over the last three years indicates that although the amount of fraud across public and private sector banks has reduced, the costs involved has grown over the years.

Public sector banks reported 5,418 fraud cases in FY26, down from 6,916 in FY25, though the amount involved rose sharply to Rs 35,709 crore from Rs 23,617 crore in FY25.

Private sector banks also recorded fewer cases —3,956 in FY26, against 14,024 in FY25 —but the amount climb to Rs 11,399 crore from Rs 8,927 crore in the preceding year.

Foreign banks reported 210 fraud cases involving Rs 290 crore in FY26, compared with 1,447 cases involving Rs 181 crore the previous year. Small finance banks reported 467 fraud cases involving Rs 114 crore in FY26, while payments banks recorded 47 cases amounting to Rs 11 crore.

The RBI said it will initiate a micro-data analytics project for cyber risk and review of the risk-based approach for KYC/AML supervision during the current fiscal year. —*PTI*

—AI

NET FDI RISES TO USD 7.7B IN FY26: RBI

MUMBAI, 29 MAY

India's net foreign direct investment (FDI) sharply increased to USD 7.7 billion in 2025-26, the Reserve Bank announced, up from USD 1 billion in 2024-25. Despite the rise, inflows remained below USD 10.2 billion in 2023-24 and far lower than USD 28 billion in 2022-23.

Gross inward FDI grew to USD 94.5 billion from USD 80.6 billion, but repatriation and disinvestment rose to USD 53.6 billion, and outward FDI by Indian firms reached USD 33.3 billion, limiting net gains. The RBI noted, "FDI stood higher, both on gross and net basis," with India ranked second globally in greenfield FDI announcements after the US.

- FDIs stood higher, both on gross and net basis, with India ranking second globally in greenfield FDI announcements.

The services sector led inflows, followed by manufacturing, with contributions from Singapore, the US, Mauritius, Japan, the Netherlands, and the UAE. However, global challenges led to a USD 30.8 billion depletion in foreign exchange reserves. —*PTI*

Anthropic nears $1 trillion valuation ahead of IPO

SAN FRANCISCO, 29 MAY

American AI startup Anthropic has approached a trillion-dollar valuation, overtaking rival OpenAI as both prepare for their stock market listings. In its latest funding round, the company raised USD 65 billion in funding, led by Altimeter Capital, Dragoneer, Greenoaks, and Sequoia Capital, valuing it at USD 965 billion post-money.

The firm's AI model, Claude, expanding globally, with enterprise adoption increasing, and its run-rate revenue has surpassed USD 47 billion earlier this month.

Krishna Rao, Anthropic's Chief Financial Officer, said, "Claude is increasingly indispensable to our growing global community of customers, and we work tirelessly to make tools like Claude Code and Cowork more helpful, more powerful, and more adaptable to their needs." The funding will support advancements in safety and interpretability research, expansion of compute capacity, and scaling of products and partnerships.

Major investors include AMP PBC, Baillie Gifford, Blackstone, Brookfield, and DE Shaw Ventures, alongside infrastructure partners Micron, Samsung, and SK Hynix. Anthropic estimates revenue at USD 10.9 billion, more than doubling previous figures, and expects its first operating profit in June. It has secured agreements with Amazon, Google, Broadcom, and SpaceX for increased computational capacity.

Claude is available across AWS, Google Cloud, and Microsoft Azure.

Alfred Lin of Sequoia Capital noted, "Claude is learning how businesses operate, handling complex workflows." OpenAI raised USD 122 billion in March, valuing it at USD 852 billion. —*ANI*

SENSEX FALLS 1,000 POINTS

Investors lose Rs 6 lakh crore as markets decline for 3rd day

MUMBAI, 29 MAY

Sensex fell 1,092 points settling at 74,775.74 while Nifty closed below 24,550, with a 359.40 point drop on Friday. Investors reportedly lost Rs 6 lakh crore as Sensex market capitalisation fell from Rs 471 lakh crore to Rs 465 lakh crore.

Markets dropped for a third day as profit-taking in banking, Reliance, and ITC deepened losses. The slump was driven by volatility from the MSCI May 2026 index rebalancing and investor anxiety over monsoon forecasts, causing food inflation. However, falling crude prices helped limit the downside.

NSE Nifty dived 1.50 per cent to close at 23,547.75. BSE Sensex was dragged down by late selling and fell 1.44 per cent. The index opened higher and moved in a tight range for most of the session.

Heavy profit booking in Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, M&M and Bajaj Finance dragged the benchmark down by 1,278.69 points, or 1.68 per cent, to 74,589.11 in the pre-close session.

A total of 2,599 stocks declined, while 1,670 advanced and 194 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Additionally, Brent crude dropped 1.52 per cent to USD 92.29 per barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors offloaded equities worth Rs 1,042.70 crore on Wednesday. That day Sensex closed at 75,867.80 and Nifty at 23,907.15. Markets were closed on Thursday for Eid-ul-Adha. —*Agencies*

Air travel demand falls 3.4% in April

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

West Asia tensions have led to a 3.4 per cent fall in commericial air demand in April 2026 compared to the same period last year, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Total capacity fell 2.9 per cent, maintaining a solid load factor of 83.1 per cent. While, international demand dropped 5.3 per cent with a 5.1per cent capacity cut. However, demand actually grew 1.9 per cent excluding West Asia. Meanwhile, domestic demand stayed flat, with capacity up 0.8 per cenr and a load factor of 81.9 per cent.

IATA Director Willie Walsh, said, "The 46.6 per cent fall in demand for carriers in the West Asia due to war was so acute that it dragged overall demand down." —*ANI*

Welfare scheme to cover gig workers by 22 June

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

The government is moving to roll out social security benefits for gig and platform workers, including accident insurance, health care, maternity support and old-age protection. The Ministry of Labour & Employment is wants platforms to integrate worker data into the e-Shram portal before 22 June.

On Friday, Director General of the Ministry of Labour and Employment Ashutosh Pednekar said the government is operationalising provisions under the Code on Social Security and setting up a mechanisms for workers in the sector.

Pednekar said the government has received approval to from the National Social Security Board for Gig and Platform Workers, for welfare measures for workers in the sector. With almost one crore workers employed in the gig economy and potential to grow to 2.5 crore by the decade's end, Pednekar called it "a strategically very important sector."

According to him, the government is working on schemes that balance workers' social security demands with industry concerns over flexibility in the fast-growing, technology-driven sector. A major part of the government's strategy is integrating aggregator databases with the e-Shram portal to enable seamless access to welfare benefits. —*ANI*

DIESEL-ISOBUTANOL BLENDING MAY SOON BE MANDATORY

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

India will likely mandate blending isobutanol with diesel this year to improve India's energy security and decarbonise the road and highways sector, Ministry of Roads, Transport & Highways (MoRTH) Secretary V Umashankar said on Friday.

While addressing the CII Multimodal Transportation and Logistics Summit, Umashankar said that MoRTH may soon issue a draft notification on truck-trailer interchangeability to support the development of battery-swapping and charging infrastructure for electric heavy-duty commercial vehicles.

"Bharat Petroleum is already undertaking strategic research for isobutanol blending with diesel. And the results are very encouraging." said Umashankar.

Umashankar said that since diesel consumption is nearly twice that of petrol, diesel blending would have a far greater impact on India's energy security than petrol blending.

The ministry has issued a draft notification for vehicle manufacturing requirements for E85— a blend of 85 per cent ethanol with petrol. As well as for E100, which allows vehicles to run on nearly pure ethanol.

- "Bharat Petroleum is already undertaking strategic research for isobutanol blending with diesel. And the results are very encouraging."

"There have been some concerns about blending, but here (in India) the vehicle is manufactured differently. It will have a separate (fuel) dispenser also at the petrol pumps for dispensing E85 or E100 fuel, unlike normally blended petrol, which is done through a common dispenser," Umashankar said.

MoRTH has proposed amendments to vehicle emission rules to allow higher ethanol blends and alternative fuels, paving the way for flex-fuel and pure biofuel vehicles across all vehicle categories.

India has already achieved 20 per cent ethanol blending with petrol, reducing reliance on imported crude oil and cutting carbon emissions. —*PTI*

Mumbai to have 47 pc of India's data centre capacity

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

Mumbai accounts for about 50 per cent of India's total data centre capacity, dominanting in the sector.

Maharashtra benefits from submarine cable landing stations, a reliable power supply, robust roads, and established fibre infrastructure.

According to a report by Avendus Capital the strong demand from the BFSI sector to Mumbai, as a major telecom hub with an absence of major natural threats solidify its position. Hence, "47% of the total additional capacity over the next five years in India will likely be in Mumbai."

Mumbai's digital infrastructure remains highly consolidated, with nearly 98 per cent of the country's current installed capacity of 1,650 megawatts clustered within the top seven regional markets.

Mumbai and Chennai are leading India's data centre expansion, capitalising on their dense submarine cable system, which offer low global latencies. Chennai ranks second, aided by its strategic geographic advantages. —*ANI*

BROADCASTERS GET NO SAY

Delhi HC upholds TRAI's 12-min ad cap for TV

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

The Delhi High Court has upheld the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI) regulations capping television advertisements at 12 minutes per hour, in a ruling with significant implications for broadcasters across India. The court observed that there is "no constitutional guarantee of profitability or unlimited monetisation of public resources."

The bench rejected claims that TRAI's process lacked transparency or consultation, holding that the framework was based on stakeholder input, consumer concerns, and global regulatory practices. The court noted that the quality of service (QoS) encompasses consumers' viewing experience. Excessive advertisements and their clustering directly affect viewers and therefore fall within TRAI's regulatory domain.

The court dismissed 17 writ petitions filed by general entertainment, news, and regional channels. The bench held that both provisions being challenged— Rule 7(11) of the Cable Television Networks Rules, 1994, and Regulation 3 of the Standards of Quality of Service (Duration of Advertisements in Television Channels) Regulations, 2012 — were amended in 2013 and are constitutionally valid exercises of regulatory power that balance broadcasters' rights against the public interest in the efficient and fair use of broadcast spectrum.

Central to the judgment is the Court's emphasis on the public character of broadcasting. The bench held that spectrum and airwaves are scarce public resources held by the State in trust and must conform to constitutional principles contained in Articles 39(b) and 39(c). The regulatory framework, it said, prevents excessive commercial exploitation for equitable use of resources.

Addressing the challenge to TRAI's jurisdiction, the Court held that the regulator acted within the powers conferred upon it under Sections 11 and 36 of the TRAI Act.

The petitions challenged TRAI's rule capping television channel advertisements at 12 minutes per hour, of which 10 minutes for commercials and 2 minutes of self-promotion,

Citing that rule harmed broadcasters' revenues and was in violation to constitutional rights. —*ANI*

— ANI

Three Indian teams to compete at IIHF Worlds

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

The Indian ice hockey teams are set to compete at the next year's IIHF World Championships across men, women and U20 boys' categories, the National Federation announced on Friday. All the three national teams are placed in Division IV of the World Championship pathway, a development which marks one of the biggest milestones in the country's ice hockey journey. The IIHF competition system form the principal global championship structure of the sport, where nations compete through divisions to build their standing in world ice hockey. For India to enter this structure across three national teams at the same time makes the 2027 edition a landmark moment for Indian ice hockey. The development comes at a time when ice hockey in India has been building strong momentum through national competitions, state participation, player development initiatives, coaching support and increased visibility for winter sports. While the Indian teams have participated in international and regional tournaments in the past, the World Championships represent a larger stage in terms of scale, structure and long-term impact. India has been a full member of the International Ice Hockey Federation since 1989. —*PTI*

'Mentally stressed' Hardik Pandya to quit MI

He may enter the auction pool: Sources

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

Mumbai Indians' under-fire captain Hardik Pandya is set to quit the franchise and had conveyed this to the team management mid-season, a top tournament source has said, adding that the MI skipper is "mentally stressed and completely exhausted" after what has been a disastrous IPL.

The 32-year-old Pandya, who took over the leadership in 2024 replacing Rohit Sharma, informed the Mumbai Indians management about leaving the franchise weeks before the team's disastrous IPL campaign ended. Once the play-off hopes were dashed with quite a few games still left, it is learnt that both Pandya and MI reached an understanding on mutually parting ways.

"Hardik was mentally stressed and completely exhausted. He had also sustained a back injury. In fact, once the play-off hopes were dashed, Hardik informed the decision-makers that he wouldn't be staying back," an IPL source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

"Please understand that Hardik is only 32. He returned to MI in 2024 when he was 30. He was booed in the first year and this season too things didn't go according to plan," the source added referring to the change of guard in which the hugely popular Rohit was replaced as captain.

MI Fans had repeatedly booed Pandya during the games in the past two seasons and the all-rounder, despite seeming visibly affected by the heckling, maintained that "it has been a difficult but entertaining journey".

The IPL source said, his patience has finally run out.

According to people privy to the developments, what hurt Pandya was that senior players, who demanded 100 per cent commitment when he played T20Is, were not exactly returning the favour when he was in-charge of the franchise. It is, however, not clear whether Pandya is looking at a trade deal with another team or would prefer to enter the auction pool. —*PTI*

BCCI said some firms are giving smart sunglasses to players. Oakley and Meta recently tapped Virat Kohli to advertise their smartglass —*PTI*

Now, BCCI bans smart sunglasses, warns of action

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

The BCCI's Anti-Corruption Unit has barred the use of smart sunglasses by players and match officials in the ongoing IPL, citing its advanced communication features which allow live streaming and video calling through mobile data or Wi-Fi networks.

In an advisory to the league's franchises, the BCCI ACSU has stated that it has been noticed that some companies are marketing and selling smart sunglasses to players and support staff.

"Kindly note that these devices are equipped with advanced communication features, including live streaming, sending and receiving text messages, as well as audio and video calling capabilities through mobile data or Wi-Fi networks," the Board said.

"Accordingly, under the Players and Match Officials Area (PMOA) Minimum Standards, such goggles/glasses are classified both as an 'Audio/Video Recording Device' and a 'Communication Device'. It is, hereby, notified that the possession and/or use of 'Smart Goggles' is strictly prohibited within the PMOA," the advisory added.

In its latest advisory, the Board urged players and officials to deposit smart sunglasses as well before entering the PMOA and warned of action in case of non-compliance.

"All players and support staff are directed to deposit such devices with the Security Liaison Officer (SLO), along with their mobile phones and smartwatches, upon entering the PMOA on match days. Failure to deposit such devices shall be deemed a breach of the PMOA protocols and may result in penalties under the PMOA Minimum Standards for IPL 2026," the Board said.

The IPL this year has been rocked by incidents of code of conduct violations, prompting the BCCI to earlier issue a strict protocol which banned late night outings for players without permission from the security team. —*PTI*

Can't do without even one day of practice: Sooryavanshi

MULLANPUR, 29 MAY

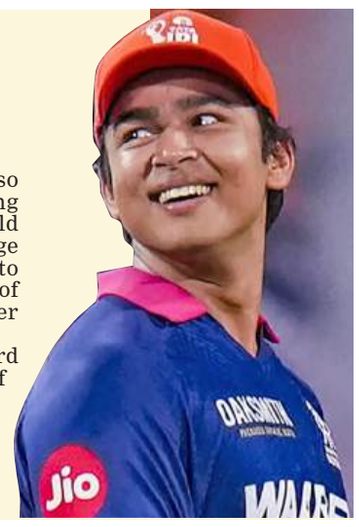
During his transition from a child prodigy to teenage sensation, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi must have hit a million balls in the nets, yet he is averse to even a day's break as "life feels slow" to him when there is no practice.

The 15-year-old from Bihar's Samastipur has been praised for his exceptional work ethic and a lot of credit goes to his father Sanjiv, who would drive him down to Patna five days a week from Samastipur for training.

"All this is because of my father. Since childhood, he has made me practise so much that if I do not practise even for a day, it feels like my life has slowed down a bit. So, I do not need to take a very long break; one day is enough," Sooryavanshi told JioStar.

"I felt I should practise because the IPL was approaching and I was also coming back after playing one-day cricket (U-19 World Cup). There was a change in format too, so I needed to work on certain aspects of my game," the teenager said.

With 680 runs and a record 65 sixes in this edition of IPL, Sooryavanshi is the biggest newsmaker in Indian cricket since the arrival of Sachin Tendulkar in 1988. —*PTI*



Rodrigues, Yastika, debutant Nandani power India to 38-run win over England

CHELMSFORD, 29 MAY

Jemimah Rodrigues and Yastika Bhatia struck fluent half-centuries before debutant pacer Nandani Sharma starred with the ball as an experimental India defeated England by 38 runs to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match women's T20I series here.

Playing without regular captain Harmanpreet Kaur, India recovered from a disastrous start to post 188 for seven and then restricted England to 150 for eight at the County Ground here on Thursday. This is India's final series before next month's T20 World Cup that begins on 12 June.

Stand-in skipper Smriti Mandhana got out for a golden duck, while her opening partner Shafali Verma capped a forgettable three-ball two with Lauren Bell (3/34) giving a fiery start to England after they opted to bowl.

Playing without regular captain Harmanpreet Kaur, India recovered from a disastrous start —*ANI*

But Rodrigues made 69 off 40 balls (1x6, 10x4s) and Yastika marked her return to the format after two years with a brisk 54 off 40 deliveries, her maiden T20I fifty. She smashed nine fours and one six. Yastika and Rodrigues counter-attacked brilliantly, stitching together a 126-run stand for the third wicket off just 76 balls to turn the innings around.s

It was debutant Nandani who turned the game decisively in India's favour. The 24-year-old pacer scalped Jones in the 16th over before removing Dani Gibson off the next ball and then dismissing Wong to finish with impressive figures of 3/34. The three-match series assumes significance for India as they look to finalise combinations ahead of the T20 World Cup. India open their campaign against Pakistan on 14 June. —*PTI*

NORWAY CHESS

Carlsen sinks Gukesh to the bottom; Praggs stays second

OSLO, 29 MAY

World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen returned to winning ways with a crushing victory over reigning classical world champion D Gukesh, sending the young Indian to the bottom of the standings, while R Praggnanandhaa stayed second after beating Vincent Keymer in Armageddon at the Norway Chess here.

Seven-time Norway Chess champion Carlsen, who had endured a sluggish start to the tournament, climbed from last to sole fourth with 4.5 points after bagging three full points, while a dejected Gukesh slipped away quietly from the playing hall through a side exit, leaving scores of young fans waiting for autographs.

Going into Friday's rest day, Alireza Firouzja remained on top despite suffering his first defeat, an Armageddon loss to Wesley. Firouzja still collected a valuable point to move to 8.5, maintaining a healthy 2.5-point lead over sole second-placed Praggnanandhaa on six points.

American Wesley So sits third on 5.5 points, a point ahead of Carlsen, while Keymer is on four.

At the bottom is world champion Gukesh on 3.5 points, as the tournament threatens to turn into another nightmare for the young Indian ahead of his world title defence against challenger Javokhir Sindarov later this year.

There were no table-slams or dramatic "Oh my God!" moments from Carlsen this time, as the Norwegian great clinically converted his advantage with the black pieces. —*PTI*

US Open adds qualifying round

NEW YORK, 29 MAY

The US Open is adding a qualifying round to its mixed doubles tournament, a boost for traditional doubles specialists who were largely shut out of last year's event in favour of singles stars.

The US Tennis Association. on Thursday, said that there would be an eight-team qualifying competition on 24 August, where the teams will be playing for the last two spots in the 16-team main draw.

Sara Errani and Andrea Vavassori won their second straight title in New York last year, but they were the only true doubles team in the event and even as defending champions needed a wild card just to get back. Eight teams got in by the players' combined singles rankings, with the remaining teams given wild cards.

The USTA revamped the event last year and moved it to the beginning of the tournament. Doubles players criticized the format as more of an exhibition for excluding them, especially with a USD 1 million prize to the winners that was far more than they usually could earn.

The first round and quarterfinals of the mixed doubles will be played 25 August with the semifinals and final on 26 August. —*PTI*

Singapore Open: Sindhu falls to nemesis An Se Young

SINGAPORE, 29 MAY

India's PV Sindhu lacked the consistency required to trouble world No. 1 An Se Young for sustained periods, going down in the quarterfinals to end her campaign at the Singapore Open Super 750 badminton tournament here on Friday.

The two-time Olympic medallist showed flashes of her attacking best and managed to put the Korean under pressure in phases, but An's superior control, movement and ability to win the crucial points ensured another comfortable 21-17 21-14 victory in their lopsided rivalry.

The loss extended Sindhu's winless run against the Olympic champion to nine matches. The Indian has managed to take a game off An only once, at the 2023 Badminton Asia Championships.

The challenge was always formidable against an opponent who has lost just one match this year after suffering only four defeats in the whole of 2025.

Sindhu looked intent on taking the attack to An from the outset, using her powerful smashes and early interceptions to dictate rallies whenever possible. However, she trailed 7-11 at the mid-game interval in the opening game before clawing her way back to 13-14 with aggressive returns.

The Korean repeatedly moved Sindhu around the court with her exceptional retrieval skills before earning seven match points. She then sealed her place in the semifinals after a 48-minute contest. —*PTI*

AMID RESTLESS SCHEDULES

Sleep is cricket's new performance frontier

NEW DELHI, 29 MAY

Long after the floodlights go off and the crowd noise fades into the night, the modern cricketer's toughest battle is often just beginning - the struggle to sleep.

A T20 game ending close to midnight, adrenaline still surging through the body, an early morning flight to another city, a training session less than 12 hours away and another high-pressure match looming – in elite cricket's unforgiving calendar, recovery windows are shrinking rapidly, forcing teams and sports scientists to treat sleep not as passive rest but as a carefully monitored performance tool.

What was once considered a lifestyle issue has now become one of the most critical aspects of modern athlete management.

From wearable sleep trackers and recovery scores to circadian rhythm planning and jet-lag protocols, elite cricket is increasingly embracing sleep science in its pursuit of peak performance and injury prevention.

"When we talk about elite sport, training quality is no longer the only separator," says sleep expert Dr Monika Sharma, who travelled with the Indian contingent during the Paris Olympics as a sleep advisor — a relatively new concept in Indian sport.

"In T20 cricket, matches often finish late at night. Players may finish competition at 11pm, but physiologically several processes need to settle down before the brain begins preparing for sleep and recovery," Sharma explained.

"I consult with cricketers and we often see that despite exhaustion, they are unable to fall asleep until 2am or 3am. There are back-to-back matches, early morning flights and training sessions the next day, which compress the recovery window significantly."

According to sports science experts, inadequate sleep does not merely cause tiredness. It affects reaction time, concentration, mood stability, immunity, hormonal balance and even technical execution.

"When recovery is inadequate, it leads to circadian misalignment. That misalignment causes small but significant errors in decision-making, batting timing, bowling accuracy and mood regulation," Sharma said.

Globally, teams in Formula One, the NBA, Olympic programmes, football clubs and professional cycling now routinely employ sleep specialists and fatigue-management experts. Indian sport, too, has started embracing the concept. —*PTI*

India team celebrate their win in Perth on Friday —*PTI*

WOMEN'S HOCKEY

INDIA BEAT AUS TO TAKE 2-1 LEAD

PERTH, 29 MAY

India struck two field goals to defeat hosts Australia in the third game to take a 2-1 lead in the four-match women's friendly hockey series, here on Friday. The two sides displayed a disciplined defensive display as the first two quarters went goalless.

India eventually found the breakthrough in the third quarter when Sonam (36th minute) scored to put the visitors ahead and continued their momentum in the final quarter when Lalremsiami (49th) doubled the lead.

The Indians then defended in numbers to deny any breakthrough to the Australian side to secure a deserving win. The fourth and final match will be played on Saturday at the same venue. —*PTI*